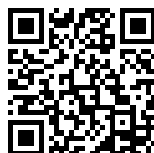

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WEEPING CROSS

STUART

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WEEPING CROSS

Weeping Cross

An Unworldly Story

By

HENRY LONGAN STUART



New York
Doubleday, Page & Company
1908

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TO AGNES BARTLETT
AN AMERICAN WOMAN

"A WOMAN MAY YIELD TO SUCH A MAN WHOM IN NO CASE SHE
WOULD HAVE MARRIED: I MEANE NOT FOR THE CONDITIONS OF
HIS FORTUNE, BUT FOR THE QUALITIES OF HIS PERSON. FEW HAVE
WEDDED THEIR SWEETHEARTS, THEIR PARAMOURS OR MISTRESSES
BUT HAVE COME HOME BY *Weeping Crosse* AND ERE LONG REPENTED
THEIR BARGAINE."

—THE ESSAYES OF MICHAEL, LORD OF MONTAIGNE.

IN EXITU

*When the cloven waters roll
Back on them that sought my soul,
And they perish in the flood
Of the red sea of Thy blood,*

*Is it counted for a fault
That I taste Thy mercies salt,
And with feet dry-shod would fain
Stand on Egypt's shores again?*

*Not because my heart or will
For the flesh-pot lusteth still;
Not because before mine eyes
League on league Thy desert lies;*

*Foodless while unused hands
Grove for manna mid its sands,
— Waterless, until Thou smite
Water from the mountain's height.*

*Ere that midnight, when such fear
Shook me, that I woke to hear
Past the spattered doors the cry
Ringing: Gird thyself, and fly.*

*Well Thou knowest there were those
Whom my heart's corruptness chose;
Comrades, by our partnership
In the Ethiop's goad and whip.*

*Then I found them not, nor sought
All my senses were distraught
With the night — the torches' glare
And the women's cry to spare.*

WEEPING CROSS

*Sometimes seemed it that I guest
Face or voice from out the rest:
Then the darkness — then the host
Overwhelmed them: they were lost.*

*And as flocks are shepherded,
On all sides the city's dread
Bore us through the rage and din
Past the pasture land of Sin.*

*Looking not to left nor right,
Fear compelled my feet a night;
Morning broke — I wept to see
Not one face I loved by me.*

*Sharers of the aforetime task
Oh, rebuke not when I ask
Mid Thine awful mercies where
Had they parcel, part, or share.*

*Lord, regard them, let me know
In thy land where I shall go,
That the covenant extends
To their souls who were my friends.*

*That no plagues of Thine afresh
Scourge my brethren in the flesh,
But the judgment and the wave
Sundered us that Thou might'st save.*

PREFACE

THE cipher document which is entitled "The Confession" of Father Fitzsimon, or Father Hopwell, as he was called during the latter years of his life, has always been known to exist among the archives of the Society of Jesus. The curious may find mention of it in the Jesuit relations from North America, Series for the year 1665-1666, and the renegade Radisson seems to refer to it when he says: "Tractable . . . as Fitzsimon found the salvages."

A curious fate has hitherto attended upon any attempt to give the memoir to the world. The author's own work in this respect was interrupted by the subversion of the Stuart dynasty and the consequent flight of the Jesuits from Oxford. During the few months that elapsed before his death, a heartbroken man, in Paris, it is unlikely that it was again touched by his hand.

A Father Murray of the English Province prepared the Memoir for publication some sixty years after the author's death. Murray was employed in and about London previously to the outbreak of the second Jacobite rising, and his translation, together with some parts of the cipher itself upon which, he was actually working at the time, disappeared in the confusion of his arrest at his lodgings in Great Ormond Street. Some notes of his have been preserved in the present work.

Had the narrative been published at the first time of inception, it is possible that, incidentally, the verdict of history might have been modified upon what has, even by impartial historians, come to be considered an indelible blot upon the Jesuit Order and Missions.

The facts of the Long Meadow Massacre are well known and horrible enough. On the night of the 15-16 November 1652, upon a spot now covered by factories and railway sidings, the little settlement of Long Meadow or Pickosick, as it was sometimes called from its situation upon the Pickosick brook, one of many rivulets that flow down here

from the uplands of Northern Massachusetts to meet the sandy and erratic Connecticut, was attacked by Indians, the town burned and its inhabitants massacred almost to a living soul. Throughout the Colony and in England this "tragedy of the wilderness" made an impression disproportionate to its magnitude. It was a time of profound peace; there had been no war with the surrounding tribes for fifteen years: indeed, a number of the principal inhabitants of the larger settlement of Summerfield were, happily for themselves, absent at a reception in Boston given by Governor Endicott to meet the envoys from the English Parliament.

A handful of survivors who succeeded, after incredible perils and hardships, in making their way to the fort wherein the inhabitants of Summerfield took refuge, deposed in the most absolute manner that they had seen the Indians incited to their bloody work, some said by two, some by three Roman ecclesiastics, dressed in the black habit of their order and crucifix in hand. These positive statements, coupled with the presence in the hapless settlement for a year previously of an indentured servant known to have been a Jesuit scholastic or pupil, have sufficed to fasten the responsibility for this midnight assassination for all time upon the shoulders of the Society of Jesus.

The tale of the Long Meadow Massacre played its part in the great movement which, after an unequal struggle of a century, settled the religious and dynastic question once for all in our country, and it is perhaps late in the day to ask for a reopening of the case on the ground of insufficient evidence. History shows a reluctance to revise its verdict upon such questions for which there is a reason handy. To students of it, as a logical science, there may well be something disquieting in the undue share which slanders and misrepresentation can be proved to have had in starting or prospering what are called "great national movements," and they may be pardoned some impatience when those who would be for ever picking out fault and flaws threaten to bring the entire edifice of their affection about their ears. The modester annalist, however, knows no such scruples, and he is now enough repaid if, upon one of its blackening stones he has succeeded in restoring the defaced image of a brave and unfortunate man.

PROLOGUE

THE things which are hereinafter to be set down, and which are nothing but a narrative of that part of my life, before the mercy of God overtook me, concerning which so many lying tongues have clacked and inventive engines made busy, are now so little published upon a sudden impulse or expedient that it hath always been an abiding intention with me, I'll own at times dejected, at times lively, as the tides of my own unstable temper might change, to give them unto the world. This not only in the days before my election, when 't was lawful for me to do, tho' hard to determine, what was the right in mine own eyes, but since, when by the mercy of God, there is ever present to me, a means for casting off the burden of my own hardly governed will, all I do or leave undone now being ordered by obedience.

One occasion in especial I remember shortly before my ordination, the exaltation of my call still strong upon me, not yet fretted by earthly intrusions, coming upon this manuscript amid a hotchpotch of trimmed clothes, plated spurs, horse-holsters *et hoc genus omne*, reliques of my earthly career:

"O fading witness," cried, I "to that which had better never have been! what frailty first set thee down and now bids me cherish thee? What fruit of all my pains had I ever from thee? None — save a stain upon my memory I must be ever at purging — none, save a thorn in my flesh that shall vex me to the grave! Better for me," I cried, "that the whole world were now made partners in thy secrets, than, slipt out armed and poisonous, one by one I should find them daily in my path, or bursting like a crock of vipers, suddenly you stung my good name to death!" With which conceit or its presentiment, I was so stirred, as incontinently to take the package, for 't was in our hour of recreation, and seeking Mr. Thorold who was then our master of novices, to discover unto him my bosom.

That great physician of souls, and my father under God, hearkened unto me with infinite patience as was ever his wont; only when I was done my tale, he bade me beware, and not take for any celestial inspiration what more like was a prompting of my own self love.

"For," said he, "even as we read that our divine Pattern and Master, tho' many times falsely accused, chose oftener by his silence to leave us a lesson in patience, than by Almighty logick to confound his traducers, nay, in that extreme proof and trial of all 'opened not his mouth' to the foretold scandal of many that waited for a sign, so," says he, "should we above all men, else wherefore are we called Jesuit, rejoice to bear with His name something also of that opprobrium, leaving off our own justification until the day when in the very configuration of the sky, Himself shall be justified."

With which discourse, and no less the seraphic sweetness of face and voice that transfigured him during its utterance, the pivot of my mind so violently swerved, that I reached forth my hand, meaning to cast the docket into the flames (there was burning a fire in the sick priest's room, although late spring), but this he would as little suffer me, bidding me content myself now to lay it away whence it came, for that a time might be nearer at hand than men adjudged, when the policy of Holy Church should call for its manifestation.

"And until that day, Richard," says he with a smile, "I make bold to usurp the functions of Holy Office and to put the unpublished memoir of Mr. Fitzsimon upon the Expurgatory Index. Also that he refresh his own memory no more therefrom lest those springs be poisoned still, only with the Psalmist be content to say *De peccatis juventutis ejus; Domine libera servum tuum*—from the sins of his youth, O Lord deliver thy servant."

Now whether the spirit of prophecy was then upon God's servant, as the hand of death undoubtedly was, or whether as a skilful husbandman, and called early to the harvest, he did but foresee the fruition of things whose germination was not then clear to the general, I know not; only that now when Holy Faith, beginning to raise her drooping head, reviveth in a second spring, when not alone are courts and camps sanctified by her, but our desecrate churches

and colleges as well, the devil like a roaring adversary, must to his work afresh, and a pamphlet hath lately appeared to the scandal of many, even among the weaker brethren, entitled, "The Jesuit Unhooded, or Lady C*stl*m*n's Priest: Being a true and particular relation of some passages in the life of one, late made a Doctor in Divinity of Oxford, at the American Plantations. How he seduced his master's daughter there; and was made Sachem among the Algonquines. With many other matters now for the first time set forth. By one late a Scholastick of the Society," whereof the author if he be indeed late a Scholastic had best get him to school again, for the Algonkins are seated in French America north of the Great Lakes, and their hunters, I 'll warrant, never came within 300 miles of the most vanward of the Plantations.

I was born, then, on the 8th of October in the year of our redemption, sixteen hundred and twenty-three, at Castle Cullen near to the town of Carrick, in Ireland, of how good or bad a family matters nothing now, when all such things are vanisht as smoke, and they need not the exhortation of the Wise Man to the vanity of earthly fashions whose whole lives are its index. My birth was what the world calls gentle, and being the younger son of a family punily provisioned in its puisne branch, I was shipped off at an early age, first to the College of St. Omers, afterward to Eu and Chartres, to be educated for the priesthood. In which course I had like to have continued, and after a safe and prosperous voyage, cast anchor in that haven which I have only reached after such storms and detours, but that, in my year of Rhetorick, falling into an embroilment with our Novice Master, concerning some minutes of discipline, which I still think so wise a man should have overpast, I took a distaste to the whole business, and for the better part of two years wandered over Europe on a loose end, sufficiently supplied from home for my necessities, and with enough Irish cousins of all ages in foreign service for counsel or comradeship when I lacked of either. What are called the Wars of the League were then raging, though somewhat abated of their first fury, and unballasted as I was with any settled design in life, be sure I was not long in being sucked in. On the 6th of June, 1640, as I find

from my notes, I was made cornet, through the interest of Colonel Coffey of Kilshella, a cousin of my mother, in Hoblinger's troop of Light Horse of the Imperial Service, and with them made the campaign of Saalfeld and Bohemia.

You will esteem it a sad relapse (no less indeed it seemed to me) after such progress in spirituality, to be galloping over Europe with these German raiders and rievvers; nevertheless so true is it that God's mercy is never as hard upon our heels as when we would be spurring away from it, and from those very courses which we follow to our perdition His Providence can wrest our salvation, that as Father Thorold afterward did say: that Noviciate which I had begun in the seminary I did but continue in the saddle.

Lest I grow paradoxical let me explain what special grain of temper helped this work in me.

First, then: such was the weakness of my bodily constitution, the whole of my spirit must be expended in bearing the horrid necessities of war, with little enough left for those courses whereby my comrades dissipated their time of refreshment. Secondly: the terrible truths of religion, as responsibility for sin, death, and judgment, had been too deeply impress on my mind during its tender recipient state, for any way of living to rub off — nay, the awfully short tenure upon which a soldier must hold his life did but render them doubly poignant. This I tell not in any spirit of complacency; instead I will be frank, and own that I have often suffered a private wound in my self-esteem, at seeing dangers which I could hardly bring myself to face after prayer, committal of my soul into God's hands and the like dispositions to death, carelessly confronted by some blackguard trooper betwixt two oaths. And have often wondered what special mercies outside the covenant might not wait upon such an one, for I could never be dissuaded that God loveth a brave man.

It was while we were quartered in Saalfeld, and I lay off duty with a wound in my hand that irks me as I write, that terrible family calamity descended upon us like a whirlwind out of heaven, which hath left me, in the world's nakedest use, a pilgrim and a wanderer, and might well turn my thoughts to another world, since it hath left my feet no standing room in this.

During the disorders that followed upon the withdrawal of the Lord Deputy out of Ireland, my brother Owen was slain in battle, our house burnt about our ears, and though my parents escaped, yet it was with bare life, my mother in her shift so that not three days later, a pleurisy snatched her away. The pitch of my father's letter was that of a man hourly expecting his own period, and he begged me the more incontinently to return, that he had some little remains of our fortune to lay into my hands.

I found my father smitten with a mortal chagrin, his frame, which I remembered of goodly port, so attenuate, and the flesh so hanging upon his bones, I might have passed him a dozen times and not recognised. He was already in the shadow of the tomb, and, once dispatched the business of my inheritancy, would admit of no conversation but to his soul's profit, yet I well remember rejoiced with me when I let him know that in what we consider the most vital article, God had preserved my innocence. Into this lethargy he sank daily deeper, and some three months after my arrival, during the last of which he must be fed and handled like a child, and dying a little more each day, gave his soul up to his Maker.

You may think that I was now indeed alone. My sisters, saved by God's providence from the wrath to come, were gone over into France some years before, wherein one of them is still living, Superioress of the Visitandines at Chartres and the only living soul that calls me kin. The relations and companions of my youth were dead or in foreign service or scattered — God knoweth where, who taketh account what sparrows fall to the ground. Small wonder then, that as I sate, by the fire opposite the great chair, wherein the mould of my father's inert body was still visible, my thoughts should again turn to that plough off which I had so lightly taken my hand, and to the treasure which I had so carelessly flung away. There are some predestined souls convinced as it were upon an happy instinct of the vanity of this world. These need never go into a far country to eat the draff of swine. And others there are that by the bitterness of their daily bread must be taught to hunger after that which is eternal, and in tears find a solvent for all earthly adhesions. Yet we are promised there shall be room made for all in

the Vineyard, the light-hearted with the heavy, those who went in at the first hour and those which came in at the eleventh. And truly, for one that hath much of the treasure of his heart already bestowed in Heaven, there is no situation so comfortable as that of the priest; whose office it is to be knocking daily at Heaven's gate for the living and the dead, and it goeth hard but a sight of his loved ones is at times vouchsafed him.

My mind was no sooner made up to go again into France than I began contentedly, and even with some kind of cheerful bustle to forward my preparations thereto. There was at that time and place not much choice of shipping toward the Continent of Europe, and the *One and All* of Penzance, in which I took passage to Milford had in my regard fitter been named the *One and Only*, tho' had there been a thousand, I doubt I could have made a meaner choice. Her master, Jack Pasco, was of the breed of talking Cornishmen, with the word of honesty so much in his mouth, I need not have marvelled to find but little in his heart. She was ill found and provisioned for sea; I think during the whole of that voyage we ate nothing but potato and salted herring, besides weevily biscuit. Besides myself there was no other passenger; the crew, a tackle of low Welsh, went sullenly about their duty, or spent their time off watch in drinking and interminable mirthless choruses. Of her cargo I only knew she was crammed to her hatches and drew much water, but I conjecture now she was laden with powder and munitions of war, and perhaps I slept the better for not knowing of such a fougade beneath our feet.

We were hardly off Milford when it became evident that some unusual events were in progress; the streets and more especially the taverns crowded with fellows wearing green stuff in their hats; the church bells ringing to rock their steeples, in short the whole town in that festive posture which I have observed the commonalty will adopt at any violent break in established order. In fact, the sore so long established 'twixt Crown and Parliament was come to a head and burst, the Royal Standard set up at Nottingham and an army marching upon London (*sic*).

As is well known, the King's main adherence kept in those barren parts such as Wales, away from great centres of

thrift and populousness. That he had either love or indulgence for Catholics I was never to be persuaded, nevertheless 'tis not wonderful so much of that generous breed should press forward now in his defence against the wolves that howled for his blood. I had not been two days in Milford before my Lord Herbert, the chief Catholic of that county, brought in all his standing, and having got some news of me, from Jack Pasco, who indeed so boasted of having with him an old experienced captain that I was grown an object of curiosity before I had been in this feverish town many hours — I say my Lord Herbert sent for me, a gallant but wasted young nobleman, and by his heat and hopefulness did so foment the natural infection I had taken, that to make a long story short, I let my passage go forfeit and with all my seminary intentions sown again to the winds followed him a week later into Cheshire.

I am not to be betrayed here into a prolixity upon what is still a fresh and grievous memory with many living. I followed the fortunes or misfortunes of the King's army throughout the whole of that war, without furtherance except to my infirmities nor provision other than what my horses got, and God knows they were seldom like to founder. I was near the King's side at Naseby, and can contradict the reports of his cowardice upon that occasion, for he was a man with all the elements of courage but slow to take fire, like all of his family. Previous to the fall of Bristol I was sent over seas, a lucky errand for my neck, since by an incredible meanness all the Catholic officers were kept out of the articles of surrender.

On a sober comparison I think this part of my life in the Manx garrison the most miserable, not excepting what I spent in slavery. The skies wept incessantly throughout the whole of that time, until I sometimes wondered if the deluge were not come again and the island about to dissolve into the sea. Our occupation was dwindled to the mounting of guards and seeing the soldiers kept their heads combed. Very soon after my arrival all reinforcement or comfort from England was cut off from us, the navy of the Parliament sweeping the channel and their ships of war coming up within cannon shot of Douglas, and what news reached us until that last of his death did but confirm what a desperate

posture the King's affairs had arrived at. My companions eked out their time with drinking and gambling, to the eventual prejudice of discipline, but I had neither the stomach for the one, nor the purse for the other, so spent the days I lay off duty drying my shins at the guard-room fire, listening to the rain drumming on the windows, or trying to read in the coals what new misfortunes might await Dick Fitzsimon when, as I foresaw, even this poor trade of soldiering should be taken from him.

Into this shadow my life had declined the day the young King thought English bullets less deadly than Scots sermons, and ventured into England. A strong draft was prepared for him in Douglas, to go over with my Lord Derby, and I had the good luck to secure an exchange with an officer who was contracted to marry a young lady of the country (she was killed, poor soul, in Ireland the year after with a three months' babe in her body). The greater part of the fleet was now withdrawn to the Medway upon the Dutch danger, else I think we had never reached England. We landed at Whitehaven in Lancashire, on the 2nd of August, 1651, and joined the King's army somewhere outside Warrington, where meeting with General O'Neil, a friend of our family that was very near the King, by his interest I was made major of Worthington's brigade, a great piece of advancement for me, and I trust not undeserved, though it came late. We were what is called a skeleton brigade, that is to say we were to pick up our complement along the line of route in the Catholic parts of Lancashire and Cheshire, by which things our march was so belated that 't was not until the last day of August we reached Worcester.

When we murmur and repine at our daily task we think not how soon the day must come, and that task be set us to do well or ill for the last time. Little happiness my years of soldiering had brought me, and no repute; yet I cannot even now, old grey-headed priest as I am, think of the day of Worcester but with a mist before my eyes and a full throat. 'T was a close smoky autumn morning as I well remember, the haze was blowing off the scorched fields and dark woods that lie along Temes' and Severn's shore, the drums and fifes playing "break of day" through

our quarters and the trumpets sounding "aux champs" when I fastened on sword and set foot into stirrup for my last earthly combat.

I am come thus early in my recitation to a place I foresaw, wherein shall be tribulation and the pen as heavy in my hand as an oar.

Such a story as this is like unto a voyage; at its outset all hope and courage, the bourne nearer mayhap than ever it shall seem again, no thought nor precognition of what reason prophecies must attend upon it, such and such storms and shoals, detours and stagnant calms. Or rather is it like unto the ship herself, tugged out of an haven and given over to the governance of uncertain currents and aerial whims; anon fleeing before a storm, the wind shrieking through bare poles, again forced to spread every sail and artifice, if perchance they may avail to bring her through Sargasso's weedy sea, belike making shipwreck in mid-ocean and all her labours in vain. 'T would be easy for me to tell what all, by a short abridgement may discover for themselves, that in this battle, whereby we imagined our reestablishment should be secured, we were smitten and dispersed to the four winds of heaven, I myself dragged from hiding and driven, a miserable slave and captive to London; hatless and shoeless, fevered, starving, and running like a beast from the hand that smote me; that I learned what 't was to envy the dog his kennel, the sow her sty, nay, the very dead their graves, and to curse the vitality that kept me out of mine. All these things are but words to-day and to what shall their cumulus avail? 'T is as though one should think by dropping stones into the sea to raise a cairn, or by words to convince one born blind of colours.

(Nay, blessed, blessed road, that led me to my love, and I guest it not wherefore did I ever repine at thy discomforts, wherefore begrudge thy pains? Oh! wert thou longer and bitterer tenfold, thy goal the same, how blithely could I tread thee to-night!)

By the humanity of a surgeon attached to our guard in London, who perceived the quality of my distemper

from the first, I was cast, when the spotted fever broke out amongst the prisoners, not into the pest-house with the others, but into the Marshalsea prison, farther along, where there was an hospital for sick debtors and the like, and there I am told lay for weeks 'twixt life and death, consumed with a frightful fever of the body and brain, waking out of my delirium only to experience a raging thirst, supreme lassitude and desire for death. There was a gentlewoman, not very young, who used to come visiting in that prison. She was a widow, a person of quality, who having lost an adored husband in the wars, now lived retired from the world, 'as scripture prescribes for them, spending her time visiting prisons and hospitals and relieving the necessities of God's poor. She was not a Catholic, nay, rather of the Puritanic or Calvinist heresy, but God had been good to her and above her dogmatick errors had given her true religion which is to visit the widow and the fatherless and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. Her name was not known in the prison, only she was called Lady Whitecap, or Madam Whitecap, because she had all her hair gathered up under a widow's linen coif. She came to the Marshalsea pretty often, perhaps twice in a week, bringing her servants with broths for the sick or linen for the childing women, and herself carrying always about with her a little black Testament, and to such an one as she had just relieved would say:

"Now, since ye cannot pay me with your pocket, you must pay me with your ears."

And would read them a few verses and give them a little unworldly counsel, such as she judged suitable to their condition; a thing that was borne hardly by some of them, for they were a dissolute, unstable sort of people; but to me there was something so sweet in her voice, as tho' worn thin by sorrow, it seemed attuned unto a string in my own heart, that though I heeded not her homilies, yet I would look forward to her coming and beg her when she was done to read me yet a little more, and be sad when she was gone. Which having noted, she contrived always to come at me the last and would read me sometimes a chapter, sometimes more from her Bible.

One day when she had given me my broth and herself punched out my pillows, she sate awhile silent, when said I:

"Madam, will ye not read me to-day?"

"No, sir," says she, "to-day I would talk awhile with you of other matters."

And asked me, civilly and a little diffident, very like a lady of breeding, what had been my story before coming to that place and if I had not travelled greatly for so young a man, for it seems I had jabbered incessantly during my delirium in both French and German besides Italian.

I told her my story, plainly and without artifice; indeed, 't was moving enough of itself. How I had studied in youth for the ministry, but afterward, by chance, become a soldier, of how my family and estate were rooted out, and from a gentleman of good prospect I had become a penniless prisoner at last of the five days' march from Worcester, at which recent and intolerable memory, so weak was I, the tears ran down my cheeks and I must stop for my sobs.

She was much moved, yet cheered me saying, "that the darkest hour was ever God's hour, that His providence had preserved me hitherto and would not now fail me," and the like, which it needed not her to tell me, yet all so sweet and womanly, I could but kiss her hands and bless her.

She further bade me know that herself was not without interest in the world, that what she could do for me she gladly would do, and make herself very busy in my behalf.

I saw her not again, but one day a week thence comes a messenger with a warrant for the warden, to bring Richard Fitzsimon his prisoner before the Council to be examined touching his necessities, and I was taken down to Westminster in a coach by two tipstaves. A strange thing 't was to me to watch the people running about, pushing, bawling their wares and working at their trades, and I conceived a great horror of this rough busy world into which I must shortly go again, and wished once more I had died in my sickness, and gone home to God.

There were not more than seven or eight of the Council in session when I arrived; most of them were grey-beards with harsh, shrewd faces, but one who was much younger than the others appeared to be presiding that day and 't was by him I was most bespoken. This was Sir Henry Vane, about whom afterward so great a noise was made, when he was tried for his part in the king's death. He

had a large, fresh-coloured face, brown eyes of great vivacity and a full mouth with fine teeth. He wore his hair, which was thick and brown, in what was then called the Cavalier fashion about his ears. As I remember him, he was not a handsome man, being too fleshly and clumsy, but there was something very winsome in his face of what the French call spirituality, the Italians sympathy (we have no word for it in our tongue), 't was as though a very eager and a very honest soul illumined his mind and shone through his eyes.

He received me kindly, and when he saw I could not stand for weakness and agitation, had me take a chair. He questioned me minutely yet indulgently, tempering my answers to the others whenever they seemed unpalatable. He asked me particularly about the business of our destruction in Ireland and I told him that my father was a man well considered by all parties, a student and a retired man, who had refused many proffers of public station on account of the hazardous times, and had the Lord Deputy's safe conduct hanging in his hall the night his house was fired. I told him this was the work of a private enemy, who to-day held all our lands and publickly boasted he had raised men to the work on a forged warrant.

He asked me if I had ever been included in any surrender or article of war, and I told him truthfully I had not and had, indeed, only saved my skin by getting out of Bristol the week before its surrender when all the Catholics were excepted.

It was noon before the Lord General came in, dressed in a plain grey military habit and a low hat with a feather. Some that were sitting stood up on his entrance, but not all, and these last I thought he greeted sourly.

He was a stout, coarse-looking man of a red countenance, but not pleasantly so; rather it seemed to proceed from some distemper of heat of the blood, for there was an itchy humour on his forehead where the hat-band pressed it. He was rather impatient and brow-beating than dignified, during the reading of the agenda by the clerk he listened carelessly, breaking and stripping a quill, and gazing curiously now at one, now at another of the council, as tho' his mind were quite made up on all these minutes,

and his only concern to see how they were like to endure his decisions. My case had been put last on the list, and I wondered with a sick heart how long I should sit there in weakness and suspense, when Sir Harry Vane, who was very much my friend throughout this business, rises immediately the secretary had sate down and said:

Sir H. Vane.—My Lord General, I would ask that the last case on scriptural warrant be taken the first, for the man is now in attendance, and all the papers to hand.

The General (fretfully).—You say he is a Worcester prisoner; well, why hath he not been shipped to Guinea with the rest? Wherefore is he brought here to encroach upon our time.

Vane.—My Lord, this hath been a very sick man since coming to London.

Cromwell.—So are others sick, Sir Harry, and not brought up here.

Vane.—This my Lord, I would suggest humbly is a case wherein our prerogative of mercy be a little exercised. This is a gentleman of good family, his father well affected, who was ruined in the Irish wars and now destitute.

Cromwell.—Are the papers all here? Let me read them over. (He reads the papers.) This document saith the house was ruined in 1642. What hath been his employ these nine years?

Vane.—Sir, 't is not denied he hath been all that time on the king's service, and afterward his son's; but neither is it contended he hath by his continuance broken any parole or article of surrender.

Cromwell.—I will be stubborn about this, Sir Harry. If the man's father was well affected; how comes it his house was burnt? 'Tis not pretended the Tories destroyed it.

Vane.—No, my Lord, there is no pretence that way, only that a private enemy of Mr. Fitzsimon the elder, who was a student and a hermit not concerned with any plots and holding the Lord Deputy's safe conduct, by means of a forged warrant, and advantaged by those crazy times, did burn his house, uproot his family and now holds the property.

Cromwell.—Tush! tush! Sir Harry; you are too warm an advocate in other parties' quarrels. And there indeed

(slapping the table) lieth the kernel of the whole nut. Brother Heron, brother Heron, they will tell me my hands are red from over there. Well, I will advance it, and undertake to prove it them, that for one man I have slain, ten are mutually destroyed. And another advise I will give you on them, for I know the breed. Were there left alive but two Irishmen, sons of the same mother, and I put one to roasting, I can, and I will, have his brother to turn the spit. And now, where is your prisoner? let him stand forth.

Sir Harry made a sign with his head for me to come forward.

Cromwell.—Stand up, Fitzsimon, stand up, sirrah! (for in my weakness I leaned very heavy upon the table). If my council will not rise to me, I think it hard that my prisoners also take their ease. I will let you know, sir, you enjoy a very unusual and a very fortunate protection, for there is little I can find it in my heart to deny Sir Harry; and I think, (says he slowly,) Sir Harry will never deny me anything. (I fancied the council looked into one another's eyes at this and shifted uneasily.) In one point (he continues), I shall be open with you. Through all these stories of forged warrants and private enmities one thing standeth out very plain to me, which is — you are a most obstinate, malignant cavalier, who for nine years and from its first setting up have upheld the evil cause with all your might. Therefore, though ye be a very tame man now, broken in health and fortune, you are not to esteem yourself quite beyond our justice. I am indeed hard put to it how to deal with the man (says he to the council), if we enlarge him he is a danger to us, if we keep him, a public charge.

He knitted his brows a while, then said:

“Tell me, sir, how would it suit you to pass oversea?”

I told him eagerly there was nothing I desired more and that I had been on my way there when taken. Both he and the council, all but Vane, laughed at my simplicity.

“Nay, nay,” said he, “I spoke not of France or Holland; there is enough of an hornet's nest over there already without sending another.” He turns again on Sir Harry. “Was there not last week a letter read in council to yourself

from the Massachusetts council, asking for fit men to go out on indenture, debtors and the like unsettled persons?"

Sir Harry blushed very red. "My letter was from Governor Winthrop," said he hastily. "I do not think such as Mr. Fitzsimon were aimed at. I have it here at hand."

"It matters not to read it," said Cromwell; "what ship is ready to leave for there now?"

"The *Hand-maid*," said one of them.

"Nay, Master Purefoy," said the General, "I am better advised than you; the *Hand-maid* hath bulged her side and must repair."

"Your Highness hath all knowledge for your province," replied the other smoothly, and indeed the Lord General seemed tickled with his answer and in high humour.

"The *Sure Hope* saileth, God willing, Wednesday next," said another looking from a paper.

"Then I will undertake to find her another passenger," says Cromwell. "M. Frost (to the secretary), write a letter now to the Warden of the Marshalsea to go back by hand, bidding him convey the body of Fitzsimon on board the *Sure Hope* at Tilbury not later than the 25th of November, Wednesday next. Hath the prisoner no money at all?"

I told him I had ten pounds, taken from me when arrested.

"Bid him, then, furnish out the man as far as ten pounds will go. Write also in duplicate to Mr. Winthrop advising him of Fitzsimon's forwarding, with an endorsement upon him. And there, Sir Harry," says he, slapping Vane on the shoulder, "is your petition granted you, and we will, by your leave get to the business of the Dutch frigate. As yourself would say: *Paullo Majora canamus*."

The tipstaves were leading me away, too confused either for thanks or indignation to find utterance, indeed I know not which lay nearest my lips, when Sir Harry held up his hand.

"Yet a moment," says he. "Sirs, upon this gentleman's apprehension, a little locket was taken from him and sent us as being a Popish relick. I had the curiosity to open it, and can say I found therein only two little braids of hair. Will ye tell the council, sir, plainly, what they are. There is no wish to keep it from you."

I wept and said 't was my father's and mother's hair.
Vane got up and came round the table to me.

"Take it, sir," said he pressing a packet into my hand,
"take it and God go with you; for herein we are all idolators.
Keep a stout heart," he whispered low for mine own ear,
"ye are going to a country such as God never made another.
Faith myself would almost change places with you."

·WEEPING CROSS

Weeping Cross

CHAPTER I

WE LANDED at Boston on the 26th February, 1652, and being taken out from among the people whose perils I had shared and whose children I had fondled, bound like a malefactor I was led up the snowy street to the fort, a contemptible place to one who had seen the great fortresses of Europe, and there cast into a guard-room, the cold of which was like to have killed me the first night.

I was haled the next forenoon before some of their Council or Cabal, or whatever these sectaries choose to call it, whereat I found the same long gowns, the same nipt frosty faces of a hateful gerontocracy, as in London. Their governor Endicott was a well-looking man, very like a doctor, with a comely ashen coloured face and reverend grey curls under his cap, and what is called in Germany a Pentecostal beard, like a dove outstretched upon his mouth. My reception by them all was barbarous and inhospitable beyond aught I could have conceived possible.

Endicott. This is the man, sirs, on whom I touched last night: that came on the *Sure Hope*: the Irish papist who is dropt among us as from the skies, with a demand for his employment and maintenance in our Colony.

One of Them (with a shocked incredulous aspect). Hath Cromwell cognisance of this?

Endicott (testily). Hath he cognisance? There is the letter countersigned by him: and with all respect, I think yours but a fond question, Brother Noel. I do believe him to be the prime mover and instigator in the business. I may speak my bosom freely, sirs; for 't is well known what a friend am I to the new Settlement in England: 't will be the less offence then when I say that of late Cromwell hath cruelly unsettled us. First you remember there was the proposal we should drag our roots out of this soil and go over to Ireland to be the agents of his policy there: then, 't was the Jamaica scheme, and now this man is sent among us to eat up our inheritance.

One of the Council they called Dudley (he was milder than the others, and had been governor the year before and friend to Sir H. Vane). After all this is but one man, Mr. Endicott, and his mouth will make little difference.

Endicott. Yes; one man. So March a twelve-month walking in my orchard did I see one caterpillar, yet by June the trees were green with them, and green with naught else. Why: are ye all so simple as not to see this light fellow is a straw sent out here to tell which way the wind bloweth? The wars are now come to an end; there shall be presently a great swarm of disbanded soldiery clamouring for employment, and every warbroken one of them or dissolute debauched cavalier that hath a friend on the Council shall be spewed upon these shores, and the choice grain that God sifted and sent into the wilderness quite overlaid. I'll warrant ye now this fellow hath no trade. "Is that not so?" says he rudely to me, "speak up sirrah."

I told him I was bred a soldier and naught else.

Endicott. Well, and are we to make a war to find you employment. Have ye money?

Myself. I am heir to an estate in Ireland, of six hundred pounds a year, that is kept from me in fraudulent hands.

Endicott. An Irish estate! If ye can raise six hundred pence upon the reversion I will add a like sum from mine own pocket.

I said it seemed not possible in a town so thriving there should not be work for one man more.

Endicott. So ho! so ho! that is the tune you are bidden pipe us. Other men have worked — you would enter on their labours; others have ploughed and seeded — you would be in at the harvest home. Nay, Master Fitzsimon, I know not, nor care not, what befriending hath sent you to us; only be assured of this, this is no land like the Virginias where such a man as yourself may sit on his hams under a tree, waiting for the fruit to fall into his mouth. This is no land floating with milk and honey, or rather, the milk must be wrung from a very dry udder, and the honey not be taken until the lion is slain. Here is neither rich nor poor (shifting his furred collar) neither good sir nor good ma'am (settling his embroidered gloves). Every tub here standeth on its own bottom; here no cat but catcheth her rat; no honey, but a sharp medicine for drones: and I think, says he, looking round upon the others: 't were well you were sent back into England on the next ship leaving to advise them so.

"Nay sir," said I passionately, for their lack of bowels quite disgusted me, "rather give me a gun and a pike and let me go among the savages. Belike I shall find softer hearts there."

Endicott (leaping up in a passion, and his face from very pale becoming very red). How now! how now! Hath Cromwell and Vane sent you out here to browbeat the magistracy? I am in a mind to have you tied to the cart-tail and whipped through the streets of Boston this afternoon.

"Oh sirs!" says I, "stripes and injuries have too lately been my portion for me to fear them from you. But one thing I will tell you before ye get to ploughing furrows in my back, I come from a country barren and inclement as your own: yet there if a man hath but two oat-cakes, there is one of them for his brother; if he have two rags upon his back his neighbour shall not go naked; if a sod of turf left in his ingle, there shall none be cold outside his door. And in this connection, sirs, we have a saying I commend unto you now: "By these things men shall know that ye are My disciples."

One (aside to *Endicott*: but not so low I could not hear it). This is a plausible fellow, and I think we were best rid quickly of him.

Endicott. Who sent the letter to Vane that is referred to here?

Mr. Dudley. 'Twas I wrote him, yet in good faith; believing there was lack of men, mechanics and the like in the Connecticut settlements; 't is no fault of mine if the letter be misunderstood and presumed upon in England.

Endicott. And who advised you to that end?

Dudley. 'Twas old Mr. Fleming the magistrate at Summerfield, speaking one night to me after supper, who said 't was difficult to find servants there, for the land was fat and all working for themselves.

It is strange to me know, how carelessly I first

heard that name. There is no premonition in such matters.

Endicott. In God's name then, let this man be sent him as soon as there is a road clear. In the meantime I see no other way than to keep him here. Are ye willing to work sirrah?

"Your food will choke me," says I, "if I earn it not."

"Oh! be not so ready with pretty devised speeches," replied the Governor, "you are but just come off the sea, like a colt off grass, but we will put such a collar on your neck as shall tame you yet. I will myself instruct one of the selectmen to find you some work such as scavenging for which y' are fitted, and do you also Mr. Rawson," says he to the clerk, "see if on the parish register be not some discreet needy person with whom this fellow can table, an old godly man, or woman past the age of suspicion."

"All of us staid married men," said one of them, "are anxious to know what that age is: can ye inform us of it?"

"By your leave, Major Gibbons," said the Governor, lifting a reproving finger "we will have no light camp talk here. And now, take him away, Marshal."

So 't was in this wise for two months I garbished Boston streets.

I will say here that years afterward in London, Mr. Joslin told me that this Endicott was a fellow who never did a day's work in his life, unless to set honest men theirs. He was of a mean family in Dorsetshire, and by virtue of a shallow empirical skill he had in medicine, but beyond all by his aptness in mouthing a Bible text for all occasions (but I turned his flank there), had so wormed himself into the councils of these schismatics that for long,

indeed until his death in the same year as the Great Plague, there was no pie baked but Mr. Endicott must have the prime finger therein. He was a very covetous, proud, fanatical, transcendent man; he had two wives; one he brought from England, the other he married in the Colony. He had a baker's dozen of disorderly children, for whom the state was hard put afterwards to find places; he was so insolently ungrateful, many who once relieved him in his necessities he fined, flogged and wearied out them or their children. Well, let be! 't is my office now to speak well of all men, or hold my peace, and I must to my scavenging, a brave trade for a loyal gentleman.

Some there are will say work is a blessing; these would as 't were put God out of countenance who assigned it them as a curse, and speak upon a misconception of what a man's destiny was in his un-fallen state. This would have been, to know God, to learn God, to contemplate Him until the fulness of knowledge was such, only heaven could transcend it: so that I say, if that apple had not been ate, nor the serpent entertained, then death had been no abruption but a natural progression, eternity not the rest and escape from our miseries that we poor creatures love to conceive it, but a feast of which we should have had a good foretaste, and neither should desire but in God's good time, nor go to all famished and unused.

Work then hardens the heart as well as callouseth the hands, it maketh a man sleep when he should be at contemplation and to hunger after meat when he should hunger after justice. Some would say it sweetens his bread, but I know no bread was ever so sweet to me as that I ate in my father's house.

Moreover, this work I was now set upon was the most hateful and contemptible they could find me and the most ill-considered, such as in countries of Europe where I have been quartered is performed by depraved licentious convicts with irons on their legs. This was the manner of it. At two or three o'clock in the morning I must leave my bed, tho' this was little hardship, for I slept colder than I woke. I must go down to a stable that was near the house where I lodged, and harness an old blind mare into a tip cart, all this by lanthorn light and my fingers so chilled and numbed, I could not fasten the buckles until I had warmed them on the horse's flank. Ordinarily, I looked to make two journeys of it, that is, first, from the wharf, hard by my lodging and stable, up the wide street that I learn is since by tardy loyalty named King Street, but then, as I remember, only Market Stead or Market Stand, clearing all the footwalk up one side of it to beyond the Market house where the road turns west that goes to Roxbury: thence for some two hundred yards up that road as far as Springate where is the old governor's house, Major Gibbon's house and most of the great houses. That load I put off the wharf into the sea, or if 't was ebb tide, on the beach below water mark for the sea to carry away, and began my second journey which was up the east side of this same street and along the lane that crosses Boston neck, to Muddy Creek, a much longer route and harder to dump the load here, for the sea would be frozen on this side, so that daylight often found me still at my vile task, and people opening their doors as I returned homeward, than which I dreaded nothing more.

But perhaps no fitter place than this shall offer,

whereat to hold my discourse a little while you are given some description of the town or city of Boston, wherein I spent two months, not that 't is longer a rarity, for now no fellow maketh a voyage there but presently he sitteth down and puts his hand to a book wherein is omitted neither bird, beast, or fish he hath seen or heard of, many fabulous. But of these I never could find one that ran with my experience. As for the books that are written here, either they are the excursions of enthusiasts who will have it they are come into the New Jerusalem, and confounding things spiritual and temporal see all through a haze, or else upon a crafty advice to keep out strangers, they shew forth a poor jumble of huts, wherein creep at night for fear of Indians cowering wretches whose only comfort is their Bible.

BOSTON — IN NEW ENGLAND

Boston then is not built of jade nor marble, her gates are not of ivory; neither do chalcedon and porphyry enter into her composition; but she is an homely English town full of thrift and populousness.

The houses are of wood-built and buttressed in the lower story with great tree trunks squared and durable as stone, above with plank-board frames. They have here neither slates nor tiles but the rooves are shingled with pieces of the white cedar that will never warp. Already begin to be built many houses of brick, for so far hath the country round been cleaned of forest a man shall have bricks and tiles from England at less charge than he can fell trees and carry them in.

The men are inconceivably cruel, inhospitable, and cozening. Their pride, their covetousness, and

their craft are shewn forth in all they say or do. Their pride because being as haphazard a medley of sectaries as ever came together, the best of them small squires and yeomen, they yet imagine themselves the chosen of God and sole repositories of His Covenant, taken out like Lot and his children from Sodom: and I tell them plainly unless they humble themselves we shall see them yet fallen into the same terrible courses with which that family ended.

Their covetousness because they are incorrigible forestallers and usurers. No farmer in that country may sell his grain, no woodman his lumber, no fisherman his fish but at their price and pleasure. Moreover, there being little or no currency within that country, they take up their liability in commodities, choosing their own time until the market favour them, so that by using two measures, they are grown damnably rich in a very short time, and none ever trucked with them but he was soon stripped bare.

As for their guile, is it not known with what a double face they treat the king's government to-day, sending home petitions and declarations with all manner of abjection, yet regarding the warrants when they arrive no more than so much waste paper?

Of the women, there is now a generation grown up born in the Colony: they are mighty pretty and handsome shaped, somewhat large, as I admire them; but intolerably haughty and lofty of carriage, true Roses of Sharon, did they but blush easier. The young men squire them not, at least during the day, for none are at leisure, but they go about in great troops together. They are very bold, looking a man full in the face, and will not withdraw their eyes until they are quite satisfied of his outward parts. They

suffer much from toothache whether because of the cold or the sweetmeats which they are for ever at eating, taking them even to church, appeareth not. This climate creates an insatiable craving for sugar and tobacco; during my sojourn I learned to use the leaf both for smoking and to chew in the manner of sailors. There are ordinances out against burning it in the streets, except for seamen who will not be bridled, but I was indulgenced upon the unwholesomeness of my trade, and to give up this habit since hath been a very severe trial to my flesh.

Both men and women marry early; they are very fruitful but never rear the half, God in His mercy taking many ere they are grown persecutors.

Of beggars or wandering women I never saw none, yet doubt not there is store of each, for Christ hath promised the one shall not fail among us and the devil takes care of the other. The first deficit they explain upon the orderliness of their economy wherein every man must work, so that as one said to me rubbing his hands: "Beggary thrives not among us, sir." To whom I would have answered: "That it thrives not, I have but to look at your faces to be sure, but that it exists not I keep mine own opinion."

The watch goeth round every night at nine, when all must be bestowed in their houses; then, if they find any of Christ's poor asleep under hulks or houseless, they flog them, they brand them, fling them into prison, sell them into the Indies; they have no bowels, nor is a Vincent de Paul conceivable amongst them.

As for the other lack, they lay it to be sure to their Bible godliness, which I should be happy to believe, but rather think it due to the preponderance of the

female not being yet established among them, a thing that will certainly follow upon the settlement of peace and security as it hath done elsewhere; witness so many lusty families in England lately spent in an issue of daughters, whereas with us in Ireland where never is peace or plenty two years together, a failure in tail male is a thing scarce to be heard of.

Very unmannerly, I am come last to their churches and ministers. Of these I think I may speak, for there was never a Sunday while I was in Boston, but I was haled to church, a very unwilling catechumen, first in the forenoon to what is called their South Church, then in the afternoon to the other.

Their Sabbath begins, like that of the Jews who are their great prototypes, at sundown the day before. Then was I seized and flung into the bridewell, lest I should in some way profane the Sabbath, so that I told them plainly, they had changed God's ordinance for me: "Six days shalt thou work, and the seventh spend in prison." In the morning my good suit of cloth was brought me, indeed the other was by now not to be borne in any close assembly, and I was taken to their meeting house, in which I have since enquired and been told I sinned not, for we are not bidden resist everything unto death only those things that are essential, a moderation by which a Catholic can ever be known, but poor deluded Quakers will suffer death for the putting on or off of a hat, and think they improve upon the martyrs. I say I was taken to church and put upon the end bench under the eye of the marshal together with any malefactors that might be jailed at the time, and I have sate next to trembling wretches that were to die on the next day, a very horrible neighbour-

hood, and heard them abused and hell painted for them by the wolves in the pulpit, until I longed to shew them the mercy and clemency of God. There was one batch of pirates, that behaved very disorderly, winking upon the women and bandying wags with one another tho' they were to hang the next week, and when I would not join in with them railed upon me for a square-toes, and crowding against me on both hands forced me from my seat, with other pleasantries of the same sort, and I think this business of bringing criminals to church were best pretermitted. God shall surely speak best to these hardened hearts in the silence and gloom of their cells.

Of these services I despair altogether to give you any picture. Their churches are mere barns, great vaulted sounding boards, whereunder these discordant brasses and jangling cymbals, their mouths do clash and jar throughout all Sunday. In their sermons is neither thesis, argument, nor peroration, such as we are taught to use. The half or more is a repetition of Bible texts without sequence or coherence, these they repeat with closed eyes and a swaying from side to side, until, like the bonzes of whom our missionaries make report, they are thrown into an hallucination by mere recurrence of syllables. On one occasion a fellow that was in the pulpit continually cried out:

"Prepare the army of Gideon! furbish up your swords! Make bright your piercing weapons"! Against whom? There was that year no war nor talk of war, yet he soon had them all weeping and stamping with their feet.

Another time he cries out impudently:

"Woe unto ye! Gortonists, Famulists, Papists,

Seekers, Antimonians and Anabaptists!" slipping in the Universal Church of Christ betwixt these obscure, scurrilous sects.

"Woe unto ye Papists! who with blasphemy and pride, prefer your own merits and works of supererogation as equal with Christ's invaluable sufferings."

To whom I would have answered:

"Good Sir, what said our Saviour? *By their faith ye shall know them or By their fruits ye shall know them?*"

I was often in hopes they would afford me an opportunity to confound them, but they never did: being afraid, I must suppose, that I should unsettle them. They have so many names for Holy Church, a man may preach an hour and never use one twice, as: "Whore of Babylon," "The Beast," "Antichrist," "The Abomination," and the like—poor mad foaming dogs, God pity them!

They have let all sacraments go but the Lord's Supper, which they take very merrily I am told, with benches and bottles; none are baptised until they are men and women grown and will swallow all this doctrine; a man giveth his daughter in marriage with as much ceremony as I shall give the mare to the sire, and buryeth his mother as I shall plant a tree.

'Tis matter for surprise, I know, unto you, and doth not make for my elevation in your esteem, that I should so tamely have accepted my hateful duties, so quickly have inured myself to their hardship and ignominy, and never made an attempt to loosen these bonds. You will conjecture, and rightly so, there must have been many an occasion in this seafaring and shifting town, where by now arrived almost

weekly some ship, either from England, the West Indies, or French America above the province of Maine. The sailors who had come over in the *Sure Hope* remained near a month in Boston. I met them not seldom at secluded ordinaries near the Water Side, when they would offer me drink, and express indignation, whether feigned or sincere I cannot say, for I never tested them; but I say they would vow themselves highly indignant at the treatment to which a gentleman was subjected, and you would think, here was my chance of escape. I know not even if the magistrates had not privily winked at these meetings, and set them on to give me this talk, for they were not like Pharaoh and quite willing I should depart at my own blame; but I never asked them. These friends were soon gone and I made no others. I have told you there was something, I know not what, broken in me by my sufferings, but indeed I do know. 'T was that spirit of enterprise, of daring, that of all his faculties leaves a man earliest and most suddenly. 'T was there — lo 't is there no longer. The thought of escape at mine own instance was the very last to be in my head at this time; had the house I tabled in taken fire, I believe I must have been led out of it by the hand, like a fool or a little child. My life was grown to be one of those dreams in which we would fly but our feet are leaded down. All things attending it helped this illusion. The beastly nature of my office and the unsocial hours of its performance, which I shared with the night jar and owl; the bitter numbing cold which seemed to curdle my brain as well as my blood; the shuttered blind houses past which I walked as a man betwixt two painted cloths. I doubt not the rumble of my cart as I went

homeward, drowsy and gnawed with hunger, was a reveille unto many a sleepy citizen to rouse himself and begin the labours of the day as the sun rose up red and frosty out of the bay, and often belike in earlier stages of my journey, at the scrape of my spade upon the cobbles, or my cry to the horse, some sleepy Puritan has turned in his bed and thanked God he was not out in the dark and cold. But these houses I never entered: hardly any spake to me, and, the early curiosity once gone off, few regarded me. None welcomed me when I came, none grieved for me when I went, unless perhaps the poor woman with whom I lodged missed the pittance which the town paid her for my kéep, or the old blind mare that had got to whinny at my voice in her stable, wondered some morning in the doubled darkness of her brain at a new voice, and snuffed at a strange hand that put the bit into her mouth.

CHAPTER II

BUT my days at Boston, few and evil as they had been, were now numbered. Spring came early this year and the rivers were all open by the end of March. One evening at about five o'clock, as I was asleep in my straw, comes the marshal to me, bidding me get up quickly, and to put on my cloth suit, and make myself fit to go before the Magistrates. We went to Mr. Endicott's own house, which was not a large one ('t was a subtlety of this rogue I doubt not, to play Cincinnatus), and there in a snug upper chamber, panelled very handsome in their red oak, was the great man sitting, and another of his age whom I had not seen in the town before. There was a table covered with the remains of a very good dinner, whereof I doubt any crumbs reached the poor, and wine. The two ancient men were drawn a little away from the table to be near the fire.

Endicott bade the marshalsman leave me and go below stairs, and then turning to his friend says he:

"Here is Fitzsimon, Colonel Fleming, the man sent from England to supply your need, so providentially that I doubt not you had some private prayers put up in the matter."

The Colonel heeded him not greatly but looked at me very hard and very steady, not at my mean clothes nor soiled hands, but into the eyes, where alone a brave man and an honest man cares to look. As this Mr. Fleming made some noise in the affairs of

the Colony and that other of Connecticut, and was moreover an instrument of God's unsearchable providence to me, 't is fitting I think I should describe him as he then appeared.

COLONEL FLEMING OF PICKOSICK

He was a man of about fifty-five or sixty years of age, of a large though not a tall frame, and wore a plaited ruff round his neck in the fashion of his early youth, which gave him a look unduly ancient. His face was quite covered with a grizzly clipt beard that grew so close on his lips, there was nothing seen of them when he closed his mouth. His hair was cut close and he wore a velvet skull cap, not so low down on his forehead but one might see a great healed scar, running up from the left eyebrow, so severe a relic, I think the man's head must have been near cloven by the sword that inflicted it. His eyes were of a wonderful beauty, sad yet patient, slow to regard his neighbour and slow to be taken off. He spoke with a little Scotch burr to his tongue, not through his nose like the others. His whole aspect was that of a man who had lived very hard, seen great tragedies happen, was now past all gust of life, yet strong to endure all things unto the end. What I ever heard of his history I will tell here. He was a Scotchman, the cadet of a good house in Dumfriesshire; he had early gone abroad to the Low Countries and shewed himself a stout soldier; he had married a lady of that country, who was long dead, and had one daughter a widow, who kept house for him. 'T was while he was at Leyden he had come into the communion of these fanatics, and had adventured with them,

from the first settlement at Plymouth. In time of war and stress, all looked to him as a pillar of fire by night, and a cloud by day, yet during peace, I believe he fared none too happily with the magistracy, tho' he had held many offices and once lived near Boston at Roxbury, where he acquired a great fortune by the cattle trade, wherein all Scotchmen are expert. What was the point of his difference with these others, I never could hear, some little minute of church discipline or doctrine, I apprehend—they are all great strainers at gnats, splitters of hairs and searchers for moles, and having left the rock of truth shall presently dissolve into the sand, and their sects be as innumerable as its grains.

Whatever this divergence, it seems 't was not enough to cause any rupture or open breach, only that Mr. Fleming like a wise and a moderate man, perceiving the rift, declined further office among them, and presently found means to absent himself altogether from the town of Boston, going first with that part which adventured to New Haven, afterward in the Pecod war commanding a battalion, and since their pacification, in which he was a main instrument, had employed himself wholly upon the settlement of the Connecticut country, being as they would say themselves, both a Moses and a Joshua to the people; no sooner one town settled and secured than he shifted to another, thus finding at the same time an employment for his own noble, ardent spirit, and keeping beyond reach of their unceasing garboils and schisms, which never fail to break out within a year of a church being erected, for they have less of sense than Noah's beastly passengers, who forbore their mutual wars and depredations while they were

in the Ark of Safety; but these will rave and dispute concerning the covenant of grace and the covenant of works when savage Indians may be creeping round their windows.

There never was, I do believe, any man so busy as this Captain Fleming. He was forever buying of ploughs and hatchets, corn-seed and breeding cattle for his settlements; he made ordinarily three or four voyages in the year to New Haven during the open season when ships were looked for from England: then he would be bringing up settlers, putting them on their land, finding wives for the young men and fosterers for the orphan children. Yet all this counted for nothing, his good works were even an offence to sundry of those ministers with whom he saw not eye to eye; and one year, when there was a murrain on his cattle, 't was openly referred to in church as a judgment upon one who "minded his own works, and not the work of Christ; was covetous of the best grass-plats and great accommodations, so withdrew himself," here peepeth out their pharisaical pride, "far from the silver trumpets of God's Ministers."

Captain Fleming eyed me closely for some while, then says he, turning to the Governor:

"Mr. Endicott; frankness between us two hath long ceased to be an offence; therefore you shall not be displeased when I tell you that never was it my intent, nor did you ever think so, sir, that prisoners should be sent me from England, for I love not that covenant of the bondsman, but would have all around me free men, and if I could get none to do my work upon honourable wages, would myself work, and my daughter too, rather than have them. But, as misconception hath arisen upon a word of mine, and

this man assigned me, and kept for me three months at your charges, let him come with me, and I will endeavour to find him such work as he is fitted to around mine own house. Do ye ride, Master Fitzsimon, are ye saddle hard?"

"Ride — I 'll warrant he can ride," saith Endicott officiously, "like any Irish Tory."

The Colonel waited for my own reply, when I told him I was a cavalry soldier and for five years had had my home betwixt my legs.

"Then come you to me at sunrise to-morrow," said he, "for I am for riding to Summerfield by land, while the stores and the people go up from Newhaven by river. I warn you the way will be rough and uncertain, and that we must go armed, but," says he smiling, "I will not tell these matters to an old soldier."

"Ye must not leave us so soon as sunrise to-morrow," says Mr. Endicott in a profuse manner, "let me tell you, 't is taken very unneighbourly by us all of the council that y' are such a flying visitor to Boston."

To whom he answered: "Nay, nay, Mr. Endicott. Once Boston saw and heard enough of me, and furthest neighbours are ever best friends. But," says he in his Scotch accent, "we will be keeping Mr. Fitzsimon who doubtless hath his own furnishing to look to, and if we speak overmuch now we shall be poor company on to-morrow's ride."

Mr. Endicott summoned the marshalsman and pointing to me, said he:

"Bid the marshal take this man into his care to-night and to-morrow at sunrise, bring him to Colonel Fleming at Mr. Holmes's ordinary furnished out for

riding. And meantime bid the marshal have a collar put on him with a brass tag as is usual and Mr. Fleming's name on the tag."

I turned so deathly sick and cold at the last part of his speech that I had to hold by the table again as in London. My new master I think noticed my discomposure, for he said hastily to the Governor, flushing a little as he spoke:

"I think, Mr. Endicott, I am inclined to pretermitt this part of the indenture. 'T is an old fashion and hath been breached now several times."

"On the contrary, Mr. Fleming," said Endicott, "the ordinance hath quite lately been reaffirmed, being found very essential, and 't is one that should never have been put off, for 't is an outward sign of the difference betwixt bond and free, which is no invention of man, as your words make implication, but a distinction first made by God himself. 'T is a monstrous thing to me, sir, and to many, that the man who hath come into this land upon his election as a chosen vessel, shall sit cheek by jowl with him who is sent out here for his bridling and reformation, and there be naught to distinguish them in man's eyes as they are distinct in God's. I pray you, Mr. Fleming, let not this old Scriptural godly custom depart from out amongst us."

"Hear you this, Mr. Fitzsimon," says the Scotchman, "it seems you are to wear the collar. Yet would I not grieve over much thereat, for we have them, all of us, on our necks from birth, whether men see them or no; and many a man that you suspect not shall be wearing a heavier one than your own and must wait for God's hands to take it off him, while you can slit yours through with a jack-knife."

"I beg you not to talk of slitting," breaks in again Endicott's abominable voice. "The penalty for that is thirty lashes at the discretion of any magistrate — thirty lashes on your bare back, mark ye well that, Fitzsimon!"

And with this I was taken from the room.

This collar I have by me as I write, for 't was kept for me when it was cut from my neck, ye shall hear by whom; the mark made by it I fancy I can still see, tho' my eyes are grown dim. It is a little leathern piece of two fingers' breadth or less, not buckled, but riveted with two soft nails of copper, so that it must always be worn or put off altogether: there is a ring in front and a little tally of brass with two letters R. and F. dented into it with some blunt tool very roughly, whether mine own cipher or my master's I know not for, by an incredible coincidence, his initials were the same as my own.*

The chafe to my neck in wearing it was as nothing to the wound in my spirit. When 't was first put on me my very flesh crept with the indignity; I had the same inclination to conceal it from men's eyes that holy martyrs stript and brought into the arena may have felt to cover their nakedness. It is in our nature to suffer essential calamities, but to feel their symbols intolerable. Who hath not seen a dog let his dinner go, yet fight for a dry bone, or a regiment, beaten and shot to pieces, rejoice like victors because their colour is brought safe in?

*Rollo Fleming

CHAPTER III

MY NEW master's house stood not in Summerfield village, but some three miles further down the valley at a place called the Long Meadow, but also sometimes by its Indian name, Picosick, from the brook along which it lay, with so many barns and outhouses it seemed a hamlet in itself. The dwelling-house was next the river, with its gardens and orchard; there was a little paling round it of wooden rails, and two gables and a porch looked toward the farm-yard. From the gate to the porch was a plank walk with horseblock and hitching post, but this side was never opened save upon occasions of ceremony; kitchens and living-rooms lay all in the back and next the river, very private and secluded.

I remember well the night of our arrival. As we rode down the river and turnpike, which was a mere cart rut through forests, jaded and saddle-sore from our two days of travel, the valley was full of the scents and sounds of spring. A cloud had discharged itself here, which we had not felt upon the hills, and little gusts of a warm, wet wind, smote us in the face. A smell of turned mould, too, was in the air, and blether of young lambs came from the dark pastures. A few lights gleamed now on one side, now on another, as we passed a house, but the settlement seemed a straggling one and the most by now abed.

Some horses we had driven with us from Boston we turned into a field yet some distance from the house;

our own beasts we unharnessed and turned loose in the yard, and Mr. Fleming bade me take his harness into the great barn which overshadowed the house upon one side, while he himself went indoors for a lanthorn. He had scarce unlatched the gate in the palings, when the house door was flung open, and a woman ran down the boarded path and threw herself into his arms, lavishing on him a wealth of caresses, while a great hound tore round and round them, waking all the echoes of the place with his bay. Mr. Fleming took her kisses gravely and very like a father, then putting his arm about her they went into the house together, the woman still leaning her head upon his shoulder.

Mr. Fleming had spoken of his daughter before the Governor in Boston; the word had made little impression upon me then, but during our long ride, having an empty brain to entertain it, it had recurred to me very often. There are wilful images that hold their place in our minds tenaciously as any formed impression or memory. I know not wherefore I had thought of this daughter as a young girl, but it was so, and I was surprised now to see her a woman grown.

The servants' house was a little hut of logs that lay by itself under some trees that had been spared from the clearing, indeed the forest yet touched it at its back. We unlatched the door, and an old man that had been snoring very loud, roused up at the light of the lanthorn and came out of his bed, shewing his thin shanks, bare and very bristly, under a flannel bed-gown. The whole appearance of this man was very ludicrous; he had a flat cap tied down over his ears for a nightcap: his teeth were chattering with cold, altho' there were the relicks of a great fire

upon the hearth and the room to my thinking intolerably hot and close. The old servant was very chapfallen and tooth shaken, his eyebrows were so long they almost covered his eyes. He was very deaf and had lost the power to modulate his voice which was ever either too low or too loud. I will say here what I ever knew of the man, I think none ever knew all. He was not so old as he looked, being broken by misfortune, poverty, and hard living. He had been a stout soldier in the Low Countries and had there attached himself to Captain Fleming and never afterwards left him altogether. He had come out to this New Land with prospects no worse than many now rich and well considered. He had been farrier, farmer, and fisherman by turns, but naught succeeded with the poor man and here he was now in his sixtieth year thrown up like a bare hulk and living on the charity of his old officer. He was a faithful soul, I think, but an unprofitable servant, peevishly tenacious of his opinions, and half-crazed.

"Well Calamy," says the Captain as the old man peered stupidly at him. "You appear not to have looked for my coming to-night."

"Nay, nay, Captain," says the ancient man, now coming to him and taking his hand between two of his, very affectionately, "I was in all ways prepared, for 't was given me to have tidings of you on your way. First on Saturday evening as I was driving back the cows, I heard the rumour as of a great multitude rejoicing as with hymns and psalms that lasted some quarter of an hour. Thinks I: the Master hath already started. Yesterday on the Sabbath at the same hour on the valley road I hear them again, but this time louder, so that I could catch the syl-

lables of their hymn and was quite ravished listening to them: now I was assured: he is very close at hand. Well — the lamp is lit and the cruise supplied."

"Yes, Calamy," says the master, "but I find the wood-pile very low, and the dung in the stable very high."

The old man climbed back into his bed, slowly, and as one in great pain.

"I am wearied, master," says he, "telling the lads to clean the barn when they come home from ploughing."

"And I am wearied, Calamy," replies Mr. Fleming, "telling you that they never will do so: nor is it to be expected of them who are hired but to plough, and eager to be back at their wives and suppers. But you who lodge with us and lie next to the barn, should look to it. Now 't is great wonder if I do not find the roan horse foundered, and a rotten hoof or two among them."

"Master Fleming! Master Fleming!" wails the ancient servant, "be not so ungentle with me; break not a bruised reed. Behold! I am smitten as grass, there is no rest to my bones; daily the adversary gaineth on me, and I am not like to plague ye another spring."

"Tut! tut! Shubaal," said the master in a softened voice, "I look to scold you many a year yet; the spring is here now with a fine healing for your back. To-night the valley is full of her voices. How hath gone the lambing during my voyage?"

"Marvellous well," says the stricken man, "there are many that have two at the birth, and two I have taken into the house for Madam Agnes to spoon them, but the blue cow hath slipt her calf again and she were better spayed as was my advice two years gone,

But," says he raising himself upon an elbow, "can it be ye heard naught in Summerfield of the portentous monster that hath been born in Mr. Chapin's pasture." The old man rubbed his hands together and sat quite up in bed when Mr. Fleming told him he had heard nothing. My master drew the embers a little together and sitting down by the hearth and taking out a pipe and a tobacco box appeared disposed to entertain himself awhile with Calamy's conversation, motioning me to a settle to do the like.

"It hath made a great stir, master," says the patriarch, "throughout the valley, and there is likely to be some trouble given Mr. Grout in expounding it, come Sabbath. The beast which was born of a ewe that had never lambed, had the forepart of a lion, no wool upon its back but scales like a fish, and the hind parts of a sheep."

"And hath none save you seen this Zodiacal monster, Calamy?" says the Captain, his mouth twitching under his beard.

"I saw him not," says Calamy, wistful, "but Mr. Grout hath seen him and ordered him burnt, and will preach upon him 't is thought come Sunday, taking as his text that the forepart of a lion signifieth a great storm of wind to come upon us, then a great flood as foreshown by the fishes' scales, but lastly 't is hoped he will give us a comfortable prognostick from the sheep's rump, that a few shall be saved of those that stay in the fold."

'T is ill done to laugh now at the poor fool, for the hand of death was even then upon him. It seems he was one of those men that make a history and daybook of their decline, taking the world into the secrets of their hearts from hour to hour up to the

very threshold of the tomb. This is esteemed rather a healthful sign than the other, and when to such an one death cometh at last 't is a surprise greater than when a man in his lustihood is struck dead. Mr. Fleming I know suspected not the truth.

"And touching your own vision Shubaal," says he, "have none been given you, only that of the voices?"

"But one other," the man replied as one who felt himself stinted of his proper share. "On the fourth evening after ye left us was a very notable sunset, and when the sun was gone the reflexion of him lingered in the heavens a long while. Presently the black clouds in the east broke up and shaped themselves into the semblance of a mighty host with pikes and colours, who march up and deploy themselves across the sky in a crescent like to a rainbow, but all full of people so that I could see them, the captains galloping along on their horses and the colours wafted. Anon comes up from the other side behind the hills a still greater host, but red, without colours and much thicker set, who drive off the black men in a great rout, so that presently the sky was filled with their bodies; this was not all, for now begin to drop little tongues of white fire from heaven on to all the houses in the valley, on some one, on some two, or more, perched along the gable ridge like to birds — but indeed, master," says Calamy, "I see you make sport of me, and will tell no more."

"Nay," says the Squire, "not only do I not laugh at your vision, but will undertake so to expound it for you that you need not to wait on Sunday. The two hosts at strife are those of hatred and charity, the one very boastful with parade of flags and trum-

pets, the other very still and slow, but prevailing in the end. The little tongues of flame are kindly thoughts which they drop down, where 't is believed they are needed, and I trust you noted some that alighted on our house, for we are all better therefor. And now," says he rising, "I will present to you one that is to take over your work until you are cured, and share your house and to-night your bed with you. He hath been a soldier, so I doubt not ye may be of entertainment one to another. I bid you use him as a comrade and shew him his work about the house. I tell you he hath been a soldier, beyond that I do not wish that you should question him too closely, nor that your tongue should wag of it out in the field or in the town; if it does, I will assuredly hear of it and shall not fail to requite it. Now Shu-baal," he says, "you know me for a man of my word: have I your promise to do as I bid you?"

"Master," saith the old man, "my tongue is as much yours as my hands, and 't were all one though ye gave me the devil to lodge with me."

"That is well said, Calamy," replied his master. "And now Mr. Fitzsimon if you will please to light me to the house, ye may keep this lanthorn for your own work."

When we were out in the dark, Mr. Fleming asked me how I liked my housemate. I did not like him at all, but I made shift to say that he must have many stories of his soldiering to give so I doubted not would prove a companion of a winter's night with his tales.

"Ye will not get him to tell you one," replied his old officer, "nor talk aught but Scripture and visions until the mould covers in his foolish old mouth. And

yet," says he, "have I seen yonder man jump down unarmed into a trench full of Spanish and stun two by knocking their heads together, ay, and swim the Scheldt River with a letter in his mouth, their bullets splashing around him; also, he hath had three wives, all the fairest sort of women, been pirate and preacher, fisherman and Indian sagamore, and there he lieth to-night, a pattern piece and morality of earthly vanity. Well," says he, for we had come at the back of it through an orchard and herb garden, smelling very sweet after the rain, "here are we at the house, and I will wish you good night and a soft bed, if not a sweet bed-fellow."

As he passed into the house place an arrow of light from the door shot into the wet trees, and I heard a woman's high voice chiding him for his delay. Never had my condition seemed so servile as now, when I knew there would be a woman's eye to see it, a woman's lip to curl at its abjectness.

When I was back in the cabin, Shubaal let me know that I was welcome to a share in his bed, yet as 't was a narrow one and he moved not from the middle, thanking him, I made shift to pass the night upon the ground, making a couch of what stuff I could collect, and putting my feet to the fire.

Having been aroused from his first or beauty sleep, old Calamy was now wakeful and disposed for conversation. He had taken down a pipe from a shelf above his head, at which he drew or sucked thro' his broken teeth.

"I could tell ye were a soldier, Mr. Simon," says he ('t was thus he always called me; Simon was the only part of my name for which he found Scripture warrant, therefore all I might have). "I could tell

ye were a soldier for myself, by your manner of lying with your feet to the flame. Were ye one that was in that late glorious harvest?"

I told him I had been in the harvest, which was truth, for the corn is there no less than the reaper, but turned the question by asking him of his own career, and we had some indifferent talk until I was grown so sleepy I could not answer him longer. He said he had seen the devil, at which I laughed until he told me he was dressed like an Englishman, when I half believed him. He said he was ten foot high or more, a gentleman in a dark suit with bands and a low crowned hat. He remarked neither hooves nor horns, but he had a long staff in his hand with which he touched sundry of the houses, and in every house he touched died one at least of a small-pox which broke out there the next winter. He told me another story which hath given me more than one bad dream since, not because 't is so horrible but because I seem to see truth in it more than the others, and 't is too artless a narrative, I think, not to have ground of fact.

'T was when he was a fisherman, near Cape Anne in Maine, being separated from his partners in a little light shallop, and a fresh breeze blowing up as darkness fell, he steered in to an islet to lie under it until morning, for he was afeared to land on that barbarous, unknown shore. About midnight he conjectures, he was awakened by a great voice from the island, calling: "Shubaal! Shubaal! come ashore! come ashore!" upon which he took up his oars to row in and land, being gladdened for this company. Then, said he, it occurs to him, betwixt two strokes of the oars, how can these people distinguish my boat,

far less my person, at such a distance (for 't was an inky black night) and at this thought, that here was something of the supernatural, he turns his boat about so strongly and suddenly as almost to overset it, while the hair rose up on his head at the danger he was running into. When he was drawn out as far as he dared for the roughness of the sea, he kneels down in the boat and prays; presently leaps up a great fire on the beach, and men and women dancing round it with the most extravagant and uncouth gestures; after an hour or two, he never ceasing to pray, the fire vanishes as suddenly as it appeared.

In the morning, the sun shining bright, Shubaal takes a little heart, and being as full of curiosity now as he had been of terror during the night, runs into the island, and landing there, follows along the shore until he finds a place trampled by many footsteps of men and women shod, and quenched brands strewn about in great number, and more floating on the tide which was coming in. The island was but a little high sandbank covered in brush, and he searched it very thoro', his fowling piece in his hand, but saw no trace of any mortal human being.

You will think by now, I had indeed a gruesome companion in this hut, the forest whispering at our door, and wild Indians, like as not, prowling around us.

CHAPTER IV

THE cleansing of the stable from its accumulation under Shubaal's dispensation was a work of such magnitude that I went into breakfast with a very fine appetite. Shubaal set me most willingly upon my work: this morning he himself with two Negro lasses had milked the cows together, but he promised to learn me that also upon an early occasion, that there might lack nothing to me of the mystery of farm management.

After breakfast the light came with surprising suddenness, and the farm labourers began to arrive in the yard. Some brought their own teams, and we had three of our own, so that there was a pretty bustle, the master setting them all to their work and himself proposing to ride down later to oversee them. When they were gone jingling upon their errands, Mr. Fleming ordered his horse groomed and saddled, but before mounting him, he bade me fetch an axe from the tool shed and to come over to the wood-pile, where he shewed me the length of the billets I was to cut, and, while I took off my coat, himself sat down on a tree log to take his morning pipe.

I discovered very little facility for this work of wood-chopping; though I swung my axe bravely and put all my force into the blow, the great log at which I was working was little affected; the axe head indeed got pinched each time, and I had to employ near as

much force to pull it out as to bring it down. I grew intolerably hot, though 't was a fresh morning; my head began to spin, I grew uncertain on my feet and thought I was about to faint. Mr. Fleming watched me steadily to my very great annoyance: at last, taking the pipe from between his teeth, says he:

"You shew not a surprising aptitude at the wood cutting, Mr. Fitzsimon."

"To every man his trade" I replied haughtily, for I was very warm and humiliated, "this was never mine."

Mr. Fleming seemed not greatly affected. "Oh ay!" said he drily "but times change, sir, and we must adapt ourselves to their changes, or as I might say, with great aptness in the present connection, 'Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree.' "

"Come! come!" he added as he saw that I was vexed almost to tears, "lend me your axe, till I give you your first lesson. There is a way to do all things, and it should humble the best of us to think how little of all we know we have discovered for ourselves."

So saying, the bearded old man put off his coat, and taking the axe in his hand soon had half the tree lying in billets. Then he shewed me how to strike with the axe a little obliquely that the force of the blow may drive the wood asunder at the same time as it cuts into it, and to brace my foot so that none of my effort might be wasted.

"I must now be off to the field," said he; "when you have enough cut carry it in to the kitchen and fill up the fuel chest. If ye still lack for work, ask my daughter Mrs. Agnes for some, she will by then be about the house."

I improved so greatly upon my instruction that I

soon had the log cut up, and store of faggots, so that I thought I might now begin to carry them in. Mrs. Bartlett or Mrs. Agnes as most called her, was in the kitchen as I entered awkwardly, staggering under a great arm-load, and I asked her where I was to bestow them.

'T is a matter full of difficulty to fitly describe a person with whom one has ever been in intimacy. The communion of daily life doth so efface every peculiarity which was at the first meeting remarked upon, that there seem to be at last not one but two persons, and from the fusion of hearts a second dear being to have sprung, keeping some indeed of those lineaments and characters, but others gone where not all our love shall recall them.

Enough then to say that this morning I noted only that Mrs. Agnes was a tall woman of large and handsome figure, but of a surprising lightness and hastiness of movement. She had the most miss of colour in her cheeks, but blushed very easily at any affection of temper, so quickly remedied what was her worst fault. Her eyes were blue and she had a trick of looking askance with them: her nose not very small yet nowise out of proportion, no more her mouth, and her teeth very strong and white. She had that delicacy of the nostril, that is said to be a mark of breeding and which I have myself. Her chief beauty was her skin, that was of an even fineness and clarity over face and body, arms and hands. There was in her face, too, sometimes, a childish aspect that was strangely at variance with her age, for she was turned of thirty some two years: but no woman's face, I do believe, ever altered as hers from day to day, so that sometimes she would seem to be a strange woman

to be known afresh: this was a great trouble to me afterwards but I never could convince her that 't was aught beside my own sick fancy, and indeed it ran not concurrently with the changes of her mood.

Her hair was very thick and fine, of a colour neither light nor dark; there was a lock of grey hair near her left temple that she twisted under the other, but this is said to be a sign rather of agitation than of age. In this perchance and in the amplitude of her figure, her years appeared, nowhere else.

She was dressed, the first morning I saw her, in a homespun undyed dress, the colour of flax, with an apron of green saice, her sleeves rolled up and a white kerchief over her bosom; an attire, I thought, that heightened her beauty, and never liked her so well afterwards in any other.

I asked her where I should put the wood, peering over the top of it at her, like a man over a palisade. She pointed to the chimney corner without looking at me, being busy on some basting or baking, her cookery book at her elbow. But when I had tumbled it into the chest and turned about to bring more I found her in my path, pointing with an accusing finger at some traces of my feet on the white cedar boards.

"Do you see," said she, "that you have sullied our house?"

I was covered in confusion, but said I would amend it if she would suffer me.

"You will not mend it," she replied, "but make it worse. Leave it to the black wenches; they will begrudge you, I promise you, for giving them their morning's work over again."

I ventured to say that 't was a difficult matter to

make no mark with my feet, for the garden was very wet and miry.

"But there is no difficulty," says she, "in laying down a drugget as ye saw done this morning."

I had not thought of this, and, telling her so, went on with my work, being no further molested.

When the fuel chest was filled, I turned and asked her if she had any further commands for me, as I had heard our servants do in Ireland: whereupon she stopped her employment, which I remember now was pastry making, and putting the hair off her face with the back of a mealy hand, looked at me with more attention.

"You are the new man-servant my father brought from Boston are ye not?" she asks me.

I told her, yes, and upon a further questioning my name and country.

"Is it true ye were a soldier in England?" and when I had answered her. "An officer?"

I told her I had only served as a volunteer until the last battle, when I was a major of brigade.

"And what, in God's name brings you out this far," said she, "a wish to see foreign parts?"

"Nay, madam" says I, "rather misfortune than curiosity. I am a prisoner sent out here by the Council in England."

"And what do you do with that collar round your neck?" she asked.

I told her 'twas to remind me I was no longer mine own man.

"Where I you," she said, turning to her cooking, "I would take it off. It does not become you very prettily."

"Prettier" says I, "than what I shall have if I

loose it. Thirty stripes on my back, that is Mr. Endicott's own promise to me."

She looked at me pityingly a little while.

"I should think" says she "you often wish you had been slain at Worcester."

"No," I replied, "I will not lightly say that. 'T is an instinct of our nature to value even the material act of life."

"That may be," she retorted, "but I know were I a gentleman of any breeding I would rather a hundred times be dead than brought out to pack wood and water for a kitchen with a collar on my neck like our old bell-wether."

She laughed very prettily at her own conceit but I thought then 't was a heartless pleasantry to one in my condition.

"Madam," said I, "life is not given us to throw away when we wish, neither can we have it at the season and in the place where 't would be happiest for us. It belongs to Him who gave it and unto whom we must return it."

She raised her eyebrows at this speech and stared at me.

"How is this" said she "you have the good word in your mouth as pat as any of them. Are ye a Presbyterian."

I told her I was a Catholic, when she no longer laughed, but looked truly concerned.

"Did my father know of this," she asked earnestly, "when you were indentured to him?"

"I think Mr. Endicott must surely have told him, madam."

"Then do I think nothing of the sort," she cried. "Why" she added, screwing up her eyes and looking

very shrewd "how comes it ye were all so simple as not to smoke Endicott's plan? You were a charge upon his hands in Boston: none would hire you there because your religion was known; therefore he puts you off to the first stranger that comes in from the Connecticut, and says nothing about it."

"I suggest, madam, that you tell him about it on his return," says I, greatly agitated.

"No! no!" she answered shaking her head. "I will not meddle. Tell him yourself or hold your peace. And meantime, am I to find you work?"

"I was bidden to ask you for it, madam," says I.

She asked me did I not go to the field with the others and was Shubaal to come there no more? I said I thought he was too sick a man.

"A sick man" she said scornfully "he is an idle rascal, an eye-servant and a malingerer. I am glad to have his office filled by someone else; I like not to have that old pirate near me. As for your work Mr. Fitzsimon, I know not what to set you, unless sir," she said turning her head away, "you will be so civil as to fill the great copper, for the maids are to wash to-day and the floor is already spoiled."

She shewed me where the yoke and buckets hung, and whenever I came back into the kitchen from the river, I would rest the buckets awhile on the ground and talk with her. I asked her if she remembered aught of Europe; for she had not come over at the first emigration, but six years afterwards. She could just remember the great house, she said, where they lived with her mother's father, and a fountain with great fishes spouting that was opposite it among some linden trees, by which I have sate since and mingled my tears with its waters. Also a monkey

and a parrot that her uncle had and of which she would be in great terror, and of the skating by torch-light on the canals in winter, when her uncle would carry her on his shoulder, swifter than the wind. About noon she bade me bring out the trestles and boards and lay out the meal for the ploughmen who had their dinner there; then I was to take a great horn and blow it in front of the house, making a discordant sound, that however I doubt not was sweeter to their famished ears than music the most exquisite.

It was not long before the men trooped in, hungry and sweating. I had towels and buckets laid out for them in the porch; they thrust their glowing heads into the water, scrubbed them to a glow on the towels and combed their hair with a common comb before they came into the house, clumsy in their hobnails as colts. Some of them gave her a good day and she asked one or two of the married men after their wives and children, but she came not to table with them, handing me the dishes to serve them withal, and the ale to pour into their mugs. There was little conversation among them but a great crashing and clamping of jaws; no sooner one finished than he seized his hat or cap and rushed from the kitchen to where he could talk with his fellows unconstrained. Their rendezvous after dinner was old Calamy's hut, or perhaps I should now call it our hut, since I was earning my share of it, and when I joined them there, a little late from having dinner after them, I found all engaged upon a hot dispute and uproar, which ceased so suddenly upon my entrance, I must suppose they were questioning Shubal upon me. This after-dinner refreshment, when

they might smoke a pipe and sharpen their wits upon one another, was their darling luxury and recreation; they were as eager to go to it as loath to leave it, and it often encroached sadly upon the day's work.

Mr. Fleming took me to the field with them that afternoon and I learned to set a furrow, but not very deep nor certain. There was something of intoxication in the smell of the rich turned mould, and of fascination in watching it curl over like a wave, laying the grass underneath it, so that I did not feel the day's work hard at all, and experienced a strange contentment as I rode home in the twilight and comforted the horses in the great barn, dark and vast as a church. A few of the men gave me good night, as we separated, for community of labour breedeth good-fellowship as surely as emulation rancour of heart.

There were but the four of us to supper that night, which we took by candle-light. The bustles and intrusions of the day were ended and my mistress quite put off the pride or shyness or constraint which the presence of the labouring men always aroused in her. She had shifted her dress of flax for a dark stuff robe with a kerchief and wristbands of plaited muslin and had dressed her head. Nature had been more bountiful to her than fortune, and had her lot been cast in the world of Europe instead of this forest wilderness, she had been reputed not only a charming but a witty woman. There was a humour and proportion to her remarks beyond the common feminine, and a little spice of malice seasoned them that was like a tip to an arrow. But prettiest of all was it to see her fondling affection towards the old man her father. She surrounded him with love and attentions, followed his eyes with her own in order to anticipate

his least wish, and when anything lacked him, would rise herself from table to fetch it, tho' I thought this might lie in my office and would offer to serve him. She lavished her caresses upon him quite regardless of our presence, or perhaps deeming our servile and dependent condition not worthy her restraint; so kissed the back of his neck before she sate down and paddled for his hand under the table, liker a young loving wife, I thought, than a daughter.

Calamy spoke little, but sat with his cold skinny hands clasped around his mug, looking at her steadily through his eyebrows. He was jealous, I do believe, of the old man's affection for his child, and this must be said, Mrs. Agnes seldom let an occasion pass her to plant a barb in the old man's vanity. She rallied him now on his absence from the farmyard throughout the day.

"The spirit is willing, mistress," said he, "the spirit is willing, God knoweth."

"But the flesh lazy beyond the common," answered Mrs. Bartlett.

"I think you are scarce just to Calamy" the old father interposes, "he has borne the burden of the day and heat as well as any."

"Restrain her not, Master Fleming," quavered the ancient man. "For this was woman given us, to be a saving bitterness. God took a rib from Adam's side, pointed it, and planted it into his flesh and his posterity to all ages."

"Then are ye very fond of such thorns," retorts my mistress, "for ye have had three of them that we wot of."

"Bridle her not, bridle her not!" goes on the reformed pirate, "this is the medicine given me in the

last days of my pilgrimage, lest having come into this pleasant land of ease, I grow too much in love with life; and haply Master Fleming ye do me a disservice in withholding it from me."

"Well Calamy," said the daughter, "at least if we medicine your soul, and God knows I think there is need, we must not forget the corporal part of you. This will be the third night you have missed your bed draught, and I must go prepare it for you."

The taking of this potion was the great and crowning event of Calamy's day, and never did Christian martyr prepare for his torments with such postures of fortitude and resignation as Calamy for his purge. He never would ask for it, being too stiff to beg anything at a woman's hand, yet grew sulky if it was pretermitted or forgotten. When we got back in the cabin, he would take out his pipe, which was made very curious, from a great seabird's bone, and sit before the fire, sucking in the smoke and gazing in the embers, and often I marvelled what pictures of bloodshed and lust the drooping old man might be seeing in them: I say he would sit there silent until his back began to ache him (the poor man suffered from an incurable empyæma), when with many sighs he would get him to bed and lie there, snoring if he slept or groaning and praying if he woke, until the morning.

I went no more to the field after that first day: whether 't was Calamy had borne up against his illness until my arrival, or whether as often happeneth, his infirmities redoubled upon him when the obligation to labour was removed, I know not; but the old man failed from the first day, so that I presently had all his work.

The hardest part was the milking, which I must share with the Negro lasses, for there were six cows in milk against cheese making time. At the touch of Calamy's withered old hand the milk would gush forth into the frothing pail as from a conduit, yet, strain and pinch as I would, there was at first very scant reward for my pains, and I began to think Mr. Endicott was right, and the milk in this land had to be wrung from a very unwilling udder. The cows liked not my handling of them and for long had to be tethered by the head and legs, or would jerk out savagely at the pail and seek to impale me with their horns, lowing very clamorously all the while.

Besides the milking there were the cows to be driven to and from pasture each day. This last was a fatigue even more intolerable, for they could not be hindered breaking into the brush, and must be driven forth with a horse, and so thick was the growth, 't was impossible to see them a score of yards away: so that I had to ride after the sound of their bells, down the paths they had themselves made, praying God to save my eyes from the branches; indeed I could not have performed this office at all but for a little crop-eared pony that Calamy had trained, so clever he would follow them in all their shifts and doublings like a dog, stopping when at fault, a quality I never observed before nor since in a horse, and I suppose will not now be believed. Then there was chopping of wood and carrying of water from the brook for their washings, endless as the purifications of the Israelites, cleansing the stable and foddering of the horses, feeding of pigs and carrying salt to the sheep, so that was no hour from dawn to dark but had its occupation.

The chickens, of which they had great store, were Mrs. Agnes's own charge. Once or twice in the day she would issue from the garden, carrying a great Indian reed basket filled with maize, and get to calling them in her high clear voice, when they would come running from hen roosts and sheds, under fences and bushes, until she had a vast feathered host around her feet, swollen turkeys sidling timidly, and pigeons slipping and fluttering on her shoulders, seeking to take the meal from her hand. I have often watched her about this time, leaning on my spade or resting my buckets, and thought, never was such a bountiful harmonious presence as this large graceful woman's in the farm-yard, casting the meal abroad with wide sweeps of her round bare arms, like a very genius of increase and plenty, and God knows what bitter regrets and belated desire the sight awoke within me. Alas! was it not my life's tragedy that at all this tender domesticity I had ever been a lonely watcher, that my way in life had ever lain along its hard roads, never amid its fields nor at its firesides. *Patiens pulveris atque solis*, patient of dust and heat had I been from youth, knowing the bitterness, the duress of life — nothing of its joys and harvests, seeking peace amid strife, earning rest by weariness, the gaiety of my youth curbed by the discipline of the cloister, the spirit of my manhood squandered in marches and assaults. Luckless heart, say I, to wake so late!

After our conversation on that first day, my mistress noticed me little; she would give me her orders plainly and be hasty at my tardiness or vexed at my want of skill in these poor household accomplishments by turns. But indeed at this period I sought not

to obtrude myself upon her, only I would try to find occasions to come into the house, quite content that she should speak to me at all, heeding but little the manner or matter of her address, so that I fear I often repeated my mistakes and was an unprofitable servant, even as she told me.

There was one way of seeing her often that lay so near my hand, I doubt not the devil put it there. The chickens, which I have told you were her especial charge, were become a great disappointment to her, for as was but natural in that savage place, the hens would betake themselves to the bush, and there lay their eggs, in hollow trees and inaccessible places, rather than stay in their hen-coops, so that their nests and broods quickly fell a prey to the weasels and polecats that one might see daily slipping lithe and murderous, about the barn and outhouses. So that I was straitly charged by Mrs. Bartlett to bring any eggs I might find to her forthwith, when they might either be used for food, or set under some staid homie-keeping hen for hatching out, and quite a thrill of pleasure I had when running my hand through the mangers my fingers felt these smooth hard shells, for now, thinks I, I must to the house with this, and perhaps in return may have a kind word of thanks from my mistress — so unmanly and fond was I grown; and if I found three or four, I would not take them in at once, but one at a time, so as to make many errands, until she said: "What! Do ye naught all day but seek for eggs?"

Yet if she did not speak me softly, I soon had an opportunity to know that she was kindly disposed in my regard, which I will tell you of. It was on the Saturday following my arrival. This people, as I

have said, begin their Sabbath with sundown the day before, after the Jewish fashion which they love to follow in all ways, having the thunder of Sinai forever in their ears and heeding not that still small voice from the Mount. I had sought for an occasion during all those days to reveal my religion to Mr. Fleming, and perhaps had found it, but 't is one of my failings to be diffident and fearful in speaking on such intimate vital matters, besides that I hoped Mrs. Agnes would yet speak for me and save me a little the pain of the discovery. So that when my master after supper begged me to withdraw with him a while into a chamber that lay from the houseplace, thinks I, here is the ordeal come, but as he looked on me very kindly I took heart of grace, and thought perhaps I had made a bogy of all this without need. There was no candle in the chamber where we now stood, but enough of the moon through an uncurtained window for me to see his face pretty plain. He began by asking me, how I liked my housemate, and I replied there was little in him congenial but that I was thankful for his silence and found nothing amiss in his lack of curiosity, rather the other way.

"Well, Mr. Fitzsimon" says the master "I have been thinking maybe 't were pleasanter and more usual for you to lie alone, and that perchance the neighbourhood of a sick man is not a healthful thing for you. What say you to lying in our house?"

I told him 't would be agreeable, but truly I was thinking how best I should broach the other matter, and chose not my words.

"Well sir," says he briskly, "there is a little chamber in the gable over the porch that you may have and welcome. 'T is not a location I can recommend ye

in winter, when you are like to awake with your nose frozen, but the weather grows milder each day. So bring over your bed a Monday and," says he, laying his hand upon my shoulder, "since this is like to be your home, why make home of it."

"There is one adviso, sir," said I "that I must first give you, that belike may dry up your kindness in my regard, which indeed, sir," says I, "touches me very greatly. I believe you to have been deceived in me from the first."

"How now Mr. Fitzsimon," says he in an amaze, "what would you say?"

"I fear, sir, Mr. Endicott was not very precise with you in the matter of my religion."

"It is true we spoke not at length on that point," says my master smiling a little, "'t is possible he thought your material difficulties somewhat more pressing at the time than your theological."

"In that case," said I, "I must supply for him and tell you I am a Catholic."

"A Catholic," repeats the old man starting away from me; if I had repaid his kind words by a blow in the face, he could not, I think, have been more dumbfounded. "Indeed — indeed Endicott told me not of this."

"I must infer, sir" said I, "that in that case I should not have come with you."

"And I," says he in his Scots voice, "will leave you to infer nothing, but tell you, I would as soon have cut off my right hand."

"Oh!" exclaimed I bitterly, "do ye mislike my religion so greatly?"

"'T would be difficult for me to tell you how much Mr. Fitzsimon," says he drily, "without an offence to you I would be loth to give."

"And yet," said I, marvelling at him, "ye are not like these starveling tinkers and weavers. You have lived on the Continent of Europe, seen Catholic and Protestant side by side."

"Yes sir," said he, "and I have seen them torn side from side, the husband from the wife, brother from brother, father from son, never a family one of you entered but 't was presently the same—embroilments and tears, bloody duels and convent walls."

"'T is none of our fault, sir," I told him, "did not Christ Himself say He was come to bring a sword into the world."

"Therefore," says he, "do you blame me that I will not have the point at my throat?"

"Oh! I am ready to go," I cried, but my voice broke. This was the first man in ten years to speak the word of home to me. 'T is the curse of us poor homeless wanderers, that we are forever seeking some place of rest, some prop whereto we may attach the random tendrils of our affections. I thought I had found one here, and the summons to depart was very bitter to me.

"After all," said my master presently, "you say you are a Catholic, but that may mean a great deal or a very little. No man is master of his nativity, and I could shew you many a staunch Protestant, ay—even in this Colony one or two—that had Latin mumbled over their bald heads at christening. Do ye hold yourself with all of their tenets?"

"Not only do I hold them," was my reply, "but when I was taken was on my way to France to become a Jesuit priest."

"Then, indeed, Mr. Fitzsimon," says he, "I see no help for it but you must go. Fear you nothing, I will myself write such a letter to the Governor in

Boston as shall ensure you civil treatment, and after all," he adds, noticing my distress and laying his hand upon my shoulder again, "the wide world is home for a soldier." Alas! did I not know it well?

It was now that Mrs. Agnes came into the room, being grown curious I suppose at our long retirement. She held a candle in her hand which she set down upon a table, and I turned from the light, because I cared not just then she should see my eyes. Since my trouble and sickness, that dyke or dam that should stand betwixt a man's grief and the relief of tears, was grown very frail with me. I do not excuse my weakness. There are a few overcome the world — how many doth the world break?

"What has gone amiss," she asked, looking from one to the other of us. "Why do ye stay in the dark?"

"Sweetheart!" said her father, "leave us yet a little. These are not women's matters."

"Why," said she, going up to him and putting her arm through his, "is it something unfit for a woman's ears. Is Mr. Fitzsimon in trouble already?"

"I think we are both in trouble," her father said, "for Richard hath just now told me he is a Catholic, and it puzzles me where I shall send him."

"Is that all your trouble," she exclaimed, letting go his arm. "Why then, here is a great stir made over a little matter. What hath Mr. Fitzsimon's faith to do with his office here? Are ye afeard he will bewitch the cattle or put gunpowder in his kindling. I think he will hardly blow his own dinner skyhigh with ours."

"Heart!" said her father "you speak like a woman, you do not understand these matters."

"Yes, yes," she said nodding her head very stub-

bornly and prettily. "I understand them very well, better perhaps than some of you that are forever meddling in them. What hath been our bane all our lives but this same doctrinal uncharity? Why are we here to-day in this wilderness with wolves and Indians at our door? Were they Catholics who robbed you at Roxbury and sent you out here to clear the forest when you should have been governing their company? Was it a Catholic that put off this man on you now with lying sophistries? Were they Catholics we know nearer home that once made a football of a woman's heart? Oh! in God's name," said she, putting up her hands, "let a truce be put to it now."

"What!" said her father in surprise, "are you for Richard's staying with us."

"Oh no," said she, shaking her head, and from very passionate becoming very shrewd in a moment, "ye will not get me to say that. Only I say, if his religion be his sole offence it were a shame to turn him loose in this desert, to consort with Indians, for I see nothing else for him. I'll own," she added proudly, "were I a man, I would rather do so than keel pots and feed pigs, but we are not all made of the same mettle."

"I am at fault what to do," said the old man, putting his hand to his forehead. "Meantime, Mr. Fitzsimon go you on with your duties, I have indeed no fault to find with you in that article, nor my daughter neither. But you will pardon me sir," he says, "if I retract the invitation I just made you to stay under our roof. There needs time for me to grow used to these new notions. All my life," he cries, in a sort of sudden passion, raising his arm, and the veins in

his face swelling, "all my life have I fought against the foul thing, with my arms and my voice — but you will forgive me," he said, checking his fury as suddenly, "I would give no man offence, least of all in mine own house."

His daughter now whispered something in his ear, and he turned to me saying:

"We have a custom of joining together in prayer upon Saturday evening, Mr. Fitzsimon; I hardly think your conscience will forbid you thanking the Great Father of us all for His blessings with us, and praying for their continuance. I will promise to touch upon no controversial matters. We shall have store of them to-morrow," he adds with a little sigh.

I think the hardest thing I ever did in all my life was to refuse him on this point. The man's humanity and civility to me, a poor prisoner, that had been given into his hand to work his will upon, were so marvellous that I could find no words fit to thank him in. And the notion of kneeling down beside the reverend old man and the gracious woman who had pleaded for me, would have been, I know, an entrancing delight to my lonely spirit; while to refuse him this small concession just after he had given proof of such a wonderful indulgence and tolerance, sacrificing as 't were in a moment the hoarded prejudices of a lifetime, must seem I knew abominably uncharitable and ungracious. Yet Christ hath said: "Those who deny Me before men I will deny before My Father who is in Heaven. He that will not leave father and mother for Me is unworthy of Me." I had to shake my head and tell him I could not.

He was amazed at me, as I foresaw he would be, and his daughter, too.

"What!" he exclaimed, "you can not kneel down beside us simple folk and pray as men prayed before there was ever a creed to divide them?"

"Oh sir," cried I, clasping my hands, "do not press me. I will pray, I do pray for you, but it must be in mine own way."

"But what is this?" said he. "Mr. Endicott told me ye were a regular attendant at their services in Boston, both morning and evening."

"And well might I be!" I cried indignantly, for the lying double face of this man appeared in all he said or did. "Well might I be, for I was haled there every Sunday by a file of soldiers and put among the felons with my hands bolted into holes."

Mr. Fleming laughed at my heat, and so did my mistress.

"I would give something to have seen you sitting there," said she "and indeed, father, I think the Massachusetts Company have a hard bargain in Mr. Fitzsimon. Did ye call curses on them while they blessed themselves, Richard?"

"I curse no man!" said I, "but pray for all, my enemies the first."

"Which is very unmannerly to your friends," she retorted. "But I am disappointed in you, Richard, that you did not resist these persecutors even to death. You know the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church, and none of the Catholic sort has been sowed here yet?"

"No! no!" said I, "there was no call for that; the compulsion was evident to all men, from the stock holes and the marshal, therefore no scandal by my being among them."

"Why! that is strange," said the old man. "So

if I say to you, using my authority. 'Down on your knees Richard!' down you will plump; but if I ask you civilly, 'Mr. Fitzsimon, will you please to join with us,' you will deny me."

"'T is not as I would like to put it, sir," I replied, "but indeed it is about the way of it."

"Oh!" says he impatiently, "I am a plain man, and use plain words. Well, I will have no man's prayers upon compulsion, so you are free to say yours where you will and how you will. Only allow me to say, sir, 't is not of edification to me to see a man your age go about with his theological legs in irons like to a rickety child."

"Blame not Richard over much," said the daughter, looking back at me over her shoulder, as she went out of the room, holding her father's arm, "he hath been but a short time away from Mother Church and weaning children are ever sickly."

CHAPTER V

THERE was one little part of all this conversation that stuck in my head beyond the others tho' 't was long indeed before I forgot any of it, and had a very lively regret of the part conscience had forced me to play therein. My master from that time on began to regard me a little more coldly. Of his justice and civility he abated nothing, these were a part of the man's composition, not likely to be put on or off at any whim or accident, but in that favour and warmth which he had begun to extend to me he now checked himself. I think beneath all his moderation and discipline of temper this was a proud man, and felt most keenly the rebuff I had given to his treaty.

But I say 't was no words of his that stayed by me so much as the carriage of my mistress in her advocacy of my cause. I could not believe all that heat aroused by my condition, friendless and affecting as it teemed to me, and imagined I found key and motive for the most of it in one sentence that had slipped out from her reserve in the hurry of the moment: "Were they papists that once made a football of a woman's heart?" I had ere this guessed that there was a private history of Mrs. Agnes, at first perhaps only because she was a beautiful woman, in whose environment tears and tragedies were very likely happenings; but afterwards when she had broken a little thro' the first chillness of reserve (and her favour to me

rather increased as her father's slackened off, tho' ever capricious) I say that in our conversations there was an hiatus or lapse in the history she gave me of herself, for she was nowise close about it, except in this one article; but there was a period of two years as I calculated, or three, which she never would pass, checking herself when the narrative brought her to it, like a spirited horse at a ravine. She was too proud or too simple a woman to lie, but 't is in the reserve and silence of such an one, more than in all the lies and subterfuges of meaner natures, that tragedy is to be guessed at.

I spoke once to Calamy about her, a circumstance of which I am not proud, of an evening in our bed-house. He was crouched over the fire, as always now, dribbling into his pipe, while I sate on the end of my bed, as far from the glow as I could get, for 't was almost May now and a fire no comfort, myself using tobacco and experiencing great peace and contentment as that harsh incense rolled forth from mouth and nostrils as from a thurible.

"Calamy" says I, "why hath madam not married?"

"Of course she hath married," says he, "and her husband killed by salvages this ten year."

"Who was he, Shubaal?" I asked him.

"Fernando Bartlett," he replied, "son to old Sir George, no less, of the Virginia Company."

"Did ye know him, Calamy?"

"Oh, ay," says Calamy, with a snarl, "a malignant man."

"Well," I persisted, "ye say he is dead this ten year, why hath madam not wedded again?"

The old man chuckled very maliciously and pointed a wet pipe stem in the direction of the house. Says he:

"Ha, ha. Madam Agnes likes not men."

"You mean," says I, "she likes not one old man."

"I mean what I say," affirms this derelict stubbornly, "she likes not their regimen at all; she hath no use for any of them, or if so," he adds with a most hideous vile leer, "'t is not for long."

"You should take shame," I told him, "to speak so of your young mistress"; indeed I was myself ashamed at having loosed his dirty tongue upon her. He staggered to his feet, and his face flushed with senile rage.

"My mistress," he repeated shrilly, "she is no mistress of mine."

"At least," said I, "she is your master's daughter, and kind to yourself beyond your deserts."

"Well then, Mr. Simon," says he, knocking out his pipe and crawling between his blankets, "since you are so nice, in God's name speak madam herself upon the point. Only" says he, turning round under the bedclothes and lifting a gnarled finger, "mark me this. He must be a stout man and a mettlesome that puts the bridle upon Mrs. Agnes."

He said worse, but why should I repeat his loose buccaneer idioms? "Oh," he cried, when he was settled comfortably in bed, sitting up and rubbing his clammy hands together, "'t will be a brave day and God send me to see it! Once up, I will myself put the whip into his hand."

What could I with the sickly old fool? Had he been a younger man or a sounder I would have struck him, as 't was I could but bite my lip and regret my own curiosity. My words had made smart in him I know not what old wounds of vanity.

"A shrew, I tell ye, a bitter shrew," he would be muttering to himself between his groans, until he fell asleep.

Calamy's third wife, it was rumoured, had been a most intemperate scold and revenged the wrongs of her sex upon him without mercy.

On the following noon I sounded the dinner horn in vain; none hailed me in reply nor appeared upon the road, though I blew until my jaws ached, and until my mistress coming out of the house, bade me to cease the racket.

"Are ye practising a psalm tune upon it," said she ungently. I told her none would answer my call.

"Give me the horn," she said, snatching it indeed from my hand, "ye blow it not aright."

But neither would they come to her parley, though she sounded it to the full as harshly and loudly as myself; and at last she must go into the house with red cheeks and hang it upon its nail, regarding her pots and kettles with great concern.

"Richard," said she presently, more softly and a little anxious, "you had best, I think, take one of the horses and go down to the field to see what keeps them all."

I was leaving the house when she calls to me again.

"Come back," she said, "come back here. I am a fool" she cries, striking here forehead, "not to have remembered they were all to sow at Mr Chapin's and have dinner there. What a fool am I!"

"What shall we do, madam?" I ventured at last to ask her, for she stood for some time looking ruefully at the wasted meal.

"What are ye to do," she repeated turning upon me, "why, not to stand there staring at me like some great calf. Take up the trestles and put them away. We must be company to one another to-day and the pigs and Indians have the rest."

I asked madam should I wait upon her, but she said, no; I must sit down opposite to her, and we had some indifferent discourse; presently I said to her, for I was in great fear lest she should hear of my questioning Shubaal.

"Madam, I am about to be very impudent."

"Indeed, Richard," said she, smiling upon me, "fear nothing. 'T will be a new fault and I am tiring of the old ones."

"'T is a wonder to me then," says I, my heart beating, "so pretty a woman as yourself is not wedded."

She was in no wise offended, but laughed very pleasantly.

"What man would have me, Richard," she asks, narrowing her eyes at me.

"Indeed, madam, I think there would be many."

"Belike then," said she, "'t is I am difficult to please."

"Who should know it," I answered sadly, remembering some very rough speeches of late, "if not my poor self."

"Oh," she said, knitting her brows, "I speak not of that, I would not have a man too handy in these menial matters."

She ate a little in silence, then leaning over the table, said to me, "Would you know what sort I would have a man be, Richard."

"Indeed would I," I told her.

"I warn you, Richard," says she, "vanity is about to receive some most deadly wounds."

"Think not of me at all," I said, "only to pleasure yourself by the telling."

"First then," says she, drawing a great breath and putting her fingers together, "first for the outward parts of the man."

"Would you have him fair or dark visaged?" I asked.

"I care not at all," she replied, "so there was red blood under the skin, but I have a leaning, I think, to florid men, and I would yourself were ruddier, Richard."

"Tall or short, madam?"

"I love not to stoop when I kiss," she said proudly. "Also I am weary of cropped heads and shaven lips. Did ye once wear love locks, Mr. Fitzsimon?"

"Oh," says I carelessly, "I once had a great bush of hair like the rest, that went with my other vanities."

"But that vanity would come back very easy, would you suffer it," says she.

"Love locks and leather collar," says I laughing but not very merrily, "how like you the congruity?"

She did not answer, but took down a great coil of her own hair from under her cap, so long she could hold it across the table, and put it against my head where the light fell upon it.

"Your hair could not be liker mine," says she after awhile, "if they grew out of one head."

I told her I was proud to wear her colours, giving her the compliment as awkwardly as a plough boy might the sword point.

"Shall I bring you a hand-glass and you shall judge for yourself," she said, reaching back her arms to put up the loosened tress; time enough for me to see how high her bosom rose when she took her breath.

I begged her not to stir, for I felt some charm would break if she did; but the similarity of our heads I must suppose stuck in hers, and she asked me did I favour most my father or mother in this respect.

"I have a little locket with their hair upon me," I said, "would it please you to see it."

She held out her hand across the dishes, while I loosened the little trinket from my neck, that Sir Harry's kindness had preserved to me; but it had a secret snap, and I must shew her how to open it, during which our heads were very close together and her breath upon my cheek.

"Whose is the white hair?" she asked.

I told her 't was my father's.

"Was he an ancient man, Richard?"

"His hair turned white in one week," says I.

"What was his trouble?" very softly at my ear.

"His son was slain, his house burnt, his lands stolen and his wife took her death in one night; trouble enough, you 'll allow, and a hard dispensation even for a papist."

"Dear God," she whispered, again "dear God," shutting the locket and giving it back into my hand. Then as the tears rolled down my cheek, she sprang up from the table, saying harshly:

"In God's name, do not weep, I had liefer see a man drunken than in tears."

"Well," says I, brokenly, but her words dried my eyes like fire, "let us back at the bridegroom."

"No, no," said she, "we shall sit here all day, till the fire be spent, and little profit to either. Let us back at our work, and I promise you, Mr. Fitzsimon, that if no man shall fancy these poor charms before harvest, I will go stand amid the stooks like Ruth, and mayhap another Boaz shall see me and take pity upon my desolateness."

I think 't was some two weeks afterward, all of us having in the meantime stayed very good friends, my master bade me go into the harness room and get

down his great military selle and housings, for that it was muster day in Summerfield, for which reason also there were no men came to work that morning. I saddled the great horse he rode, and, having brushed out all the harness very clean, was riding him up and down in front of the house to cool him a little, for he was very fresh, having been but little exercised lately, and the maize on which they feed their horses here maketh them very hot and mettlesome: I say, I was thus exercising him when my mistress comes to the gate and making a trumpet of her hand called to me to come in, making such gestures of urgency that I haltered the beast to the hitching post and came running through the orchard.

"Mr. Fitzsimon," says she, her face flushed and her eyes dancing, "there is a most malignant cavalier in our house and I have fetched you to speak with him."

I thought her words very fanciful but went in after her to the house-place. There was a little narrow pantry at the near end of it, without a door but with a heavy curtain across which I had never seen drawn but guessed there were swords and guns kept there in a rack.

"He is in the armoury," said she, "are you a stout-hearted man enough to draw the curtain and discover him?"

I went over and pulled the curtain aside, when there stepped forth my master dressed for the exercise, in a suit of jointed black armour, very handsome, breast and back, gorget, pauldron and brassart, complete all but the greaves. His daughter had trimmed his beard and pointed his moustachios; he had on a great white ruff which I am sure none but her own hands had laundered, and with his vast orange sash and

spit sword, looked as noble an antique officer as ever ordered a battalion. He smiled indulgently at his daughter's whim.

"There, Mr. Fitzsimon," said she triumphantly, "saw ye ever a nobler figure in all your soldiering?"

"I see, sir," said I, examining his armour, "a buckle hath been missed in your cuisses, will ye suffer me to fasten it?"

"Why, Mr. Fitzsimon," said he, "'t is very civil of you, sir. We called you not in for that, 't was my daughter squired me."

I had stooped down to adjust the fastening, but she pushed me angrily aside.

"Touch them not," she said, "if I have done aught amiss, I will amend it."

The old man laid his hand upon her head as she threaded the buckle. "Here is a termagant squire," said he, "here would be a brave Andromache for some Hector."

"God send her a luckier, sir," says I (and now I know not why I said it), "that she may never see her love dragged at the chariot tail."

"Agnes," said her father presently, "Captain Gideon exercises with us to-day, and I thought to bring him home to supper. Will ye make him welcome?"

"All your friends are welcome here, father!" she replied, standing up, her face flushed with the stooping or with something else.

"I would like a particular welcome for Gideon," says the master gravely, "will ye never give it?"

"Oh father! father!" said she, laying her white arms around his gorget, "you know I am done with all men, only one dear tyrant."

"But he will not be left you forever, Agnes," the old man says. "You must have a strong shoulder to lean on, heart, when he is gone, like other women, and Gideon, tho' a homespun man, would be a very sure refuge in time of trouble."

The father had much ado to finish his speech, for she was at his lips with her own long before 't was over.

"Let be, love! Let be," he begged at last, putting down her arms.

"If ye but once speak of leaving me again," she cried, a little breathless, too, "I will stifleyewith them."

I shifted very many times from leg to leg during this familiar colloquy. I had not wit enough it seems to get me gracefully from the room. 'T is a strange thing that neither father nor daughter ever treated me as a stranger, discussing intimate matters in my hearing from the first, far beyond what they would venture with Calamy in the room, who had known the girl from an infant. I would not be ungracious, yet must say, I was not flattered by this, finding it less of a compliment than an indelicacy.

"I was to have ridden down to the drill, father," the woman says reproachfully, "now I must boil and bake against the Captain's supper."

Mr. Fleming told her to make no unusual preparation, but she put him aside saying:

"Go to! go to! ye know naught of housewifery."

When the old man had ridden away, making a very brave shewing in his armour and plumed beaver, I came back into the kitchen for my pails.

"It is thus that you were drest in your soldiering days, Mr. Fitzsimon?" she asked me.

I told her 't was something the same, only I could

never bear painted armour, and had rather keep a man to scour it. "I have been but a poor husbandman of money," said I, "or belike I would not be here to-day so naked."

"You were a great beau in those days, Richard, were you not?" she asked. "I can see holes in your ears where you would once wear jewels. I would fain have seen you in your days of brilliance."

"They were but few," I sighed, "and quickly sped, this is the only jewel left me to-day," and I flicked the tag that hung at my collar.

She appeared not greatly affected but asked me did I know the Prince Palatine.

"Very well," said I, "I was in his own troop before Naseby."

"You are not lying, Richard," she asked, looking very sharp at me.

"In God's name," said I amazed, "why should I lie to you?"

"Nay, Richard," says she, putting her hands together, "for that I ask your pardon. But now take the churn handle until I look to the spits, and while y' are churning tell me about the prince. Why man, 't is he that hath my heart, and if I could not tell you 't other day what manner of man should have me 't was because I knew not if Prince Robert were tall or short, fair or black a' vized; for if him I may not have then will I wear willow all my days, and rue be laid in my coffin."

I told her about the Prince, what a pattern and mould he was to all the young men of fashion that were in the army, so that one might say if he limped all would go lame. How once he put a laced kerchief around his neck on a cold morning, which began the

mode of cravats — of his little black dog “Belle” that loved him so, she would not be hindered of following him into the fight and whining to be taken up on his crupper, until the Roundheads thought ’t was his familiar and gave promotion to the boor that killed her at Marston. Also how he would charge us before battle not to return shot, nor scatter, but to keep knee to knee until the trumpet blew, and then to ride upon the enemy, crashing like a thunderbolt through their lines, then wheeling about and destroying them from the rear.

“And I’ll warrant ye rode at them, Richard!” says she, her lips parted, and I said, “Ay, ’t was ever easy for me to follow, but to lead men, that was what I never could do.”

“You should take shame to say so,” she cries, “oh, were I a man!”

I told her how anxious were all our young men of rank to be taken into his lifeguard, wherein no man might be enrolled, no matter his condition, until he first rode a course in Dutch trousers without drawing them at the knee, and would promise neither to seek quarter nor to give it, if ’t were so ordered.

There never, I believe, was butter churned to so martial a measure. I told her how difficult ’t was to win the man’s favour, and how flattered I was when upon the strength of an old acquaintance in Germany, where Captain Hatzfield of our regiment took him prisoner and I was of the escort, he had received me into his train, to the envy of my friends but alas! to the sorrow of my pocket.

“Oh, your pocket,” said she impatiently, “have ye not the memory of it all? Could money buy you that?”

"Why did ye never tell me aught of this before, Richard," she asked between times.

I told her I scarce thought 't was a record that would advantage me here.

"Oh! I am not like the others," she said. Presently after a little hesitance and blushing:

"Did ye never hear, I was admonished at Roxbury for lightness of carriage?"

"Who dared to reprove you?" I cried indignantly.

"Oh, catch not fire so easy, good man," she said.

"They were two very grave and reverend elders, men of God beyond cavil. They were shocked, it seems, and the whole town with them, because I whistled tunes to a lad from my window. 'T was spring, and I a lass of fifteen: a shame that I did not have the gravity befitting that age and season, was it not?"

"And did ye do penance, madam," I asked her, "in a white sheet and candle like Mistress Shore?"

She laughed and her eyes glistened at the recollection.

"I think one got away," said she, "by being very nimble for a man of his years. The other, a portly goddon, my father got down on his knees, and bade him ask my pardon with clasped hands or he would carve his heart out and give it his partner to eat. There never was a church elder so frightened at the weapons of the flesh, I 'll warrant you, Richard."

She put her apron up to her eyes and wiped them a little.

"Tell me, Richard," says she, "do ye not admire my father?"

I swore with a round oath, I loved the man.

"Thank you, thank you, sir," she cries, holding out her hands to me, but she dropped them before

I could take them; indeed I was in trouble with the spaddle at the time.

"But why hath he changed to me of late?" I asked her, "we are grown quite strangers again."

"Why sir," she said, "you put an affront on us both the other night that you cannot look to him to swallow easily. Indeed I think 't was a small favour to deny an old man, though I set no store by such things."

"Therefore," said I, "you cannot understand those to whom they are vital."

"Pray, sir," she said, "inflict not your theological troubles on me afresh. I would not have my temper spoiled on so fine a morning."

"You are very gay," said I, for she went about her work this morning trilling like a lark, and with a finer colour in her cheeks than I had ever seen there.

"Gay" said she, looking at me sidelong, "I am a woman, and to-morrow is May."

"And meantime," says I, sneering, "pleasant company to supper."

"And meantime pleasant company to supper," she repeats, "is it not all enow to set a woman's heart to beating. Feel mine" she said, suddenly, snatching my hand and pressing it to the kerchief that covered her bosom, so that the tide of life in her lifted it once or twice.

We stood looking at one another a moment after she let it drop; she blushing a little and I turned suddenly cold and dizzy.

"Oh, ye are cruel," I cried at last, I do not know why.

"Oh, ye are cruel," she says in my own voice, mocking me. "All women are cruel, Richard. Well," turning to her work again, "lucky for you this is no

fast cage of them; 't is as easy to go out as come in," and indeed I was glad to be out in the air, alone with the trouble that now my whole body tingled with.

Oh, beware! said that still small voice to which I had paid such scant heed of late. Only now begins your slavery — only now is the yoke falling on your shoulders. Till this day you have been a free man for all your collar and drudgery; none could bridle your spirit—none unsettle your peace; and why? Because they rested in God and in heaven, there was an end made to all hopes and expectancies in the flesh. Then was humiliation a sweet medicine to you, as God meant it to be, that now is like to become so nauseous; then in the measure that men abased your body, was your soul lifted up nearer to God and the immortal garland closer to your hand. What was indignity, when your pride was only to be called the child of God? What was disinheritance, when you could not lift up your eyes to the clouds but you beheld your birthright? What was pain? A ransom that redeemed you Purgatory. What was death? You were dead to the world already. Will you now fling away all this goodly treasure for the light favour of a wandering eye? Will you spend your pearl of great price to hang it in a woman's ear? No, no, Richard, ye are gone too far on the narrow way to hanker after the broad. You have fought the good fight too long to feel your arms weary now. Rally up that garrison of your senses that is grown so slothful and perfunctory. Set the guard again on your lips, that they contrive no more subtle flatteries; on your eyes, that they delight no longer in gracious contours; on your ears, that have been so greedy of late for musical accents. God hath sent you a great temptation. True, but he

hath also for you abundant grace to resist it withal. Why are you now so fearful and disordered. When did you last say your prayers, and how did ye say them? Pray now! God is no further from you in the wilderness than he was in the cloister or on the battle-field.

I rose up from my knees very much strengthened and comforted, and presently going into the house again upon some necessity, was so sharp and unmannerly to my mistress, she made no more overtures that day.

It is grown time I should say something of this Captain Gideon that I saw to-night for the first time.

Gideon was no part of his name; it was at first but a familiar title for him betwixt my mistress and myself, from being a word rather often in his mouth, and now is as handy a mask as any other to cover him with. I have indeed a strange reluctance or scruple, call it how you will, to disclose that name, which, by the inscrutable decree of God, no fault of his nor mine, my hand was to erase from the book of the living; but those who were in the Colony at that time, if any such shall read this memoir, will guess well enough of whom I speak; for he was even at the time when death by my hand abrupted him, a remarkable figure. There was no height nor dignity of employment among them, I believe, to which he might not in time have arrived, but for that accident. For he was not alone a great soldier, slayer and spoiler of naked Indians in his buff coat and corselet, as well as a mighty hunter before the Lord, but a moving speaker, too, they said, that could bring water to the eyes or fire to the heart at his will.

He was a great, tall, heavy man of thews and sinews, with a red weather-buffed face, little light grey eyes, somewhat short-sighted from an old snow blindness: a bull throat on which he wore his falling band very low and open; jaws strong as a wolftrap, great white teeth that showed in a grin across his face when he smiled, a ragged, unkempt, bristly moustache on his upper lip.

He was a man of so tireless an energy he could never be still a moment; even at table, betwixt courses, he would drum on the board with his fist; a great man at the trencher — that first night at supper it seemed his plate was forever being replenished — but a moderate drinker, and using no tobacco.

He had the Bible a little less in his mouth than the others; his creed was rather a deep great devotion to his adopted country, and belief in her destinies. He would compare it with the grain of mustard seed that is the least of all, yet in time overshadows all trees, whereas one of our Catholic children could have told him the parable is used of Christ's visible Church upon earth and not of these beggarly settlements which, so far from overtopping others, begin now to be a little pruned themselves as we see. Yet his fanatick spirit in their regard was the least offensive part of him, and he had a word in this connexion I thought very pretty, and tempers somewhat my recollection of the man.

'T was one time after supper when he had been speaking very boastful and confident as usual, my old master to rally him a little, asks him: "How come you to know all this for Gospel, Gideon?" when says he: "The forests whisper me of it"; and fell into a muse, looking upon the fire.

His manner to myself was peremptory and very like a sergeant to a recruit. He looked me over boldly, and said I was a nimble fellow he thought, and should be taught my manual; neither was he abashed when my master advised him that I was an old soldier tho' a young man, that had seen as many pitched battles as I dare swear he had seen muster days.

'T was plain he liked me none the better for this. I waited on them at table that first night, and when my mistress would call me to her side, and give me some order in her dear, dear voice — yes, I had grown to love it now for all my prayers — he would cease speaking to the old man and look curiously at us, as one that would say: “Who is this fellow, wherefore is he treated with civility? Here is somewhat I think should be amended.”

To my mistress he was attentive, yet noways gallant, listening to her sallies with an indulgent smile, as of one that would humour his hostess, yet not shifting his discourse in the least to meet her arguments; indeed 't is only in the great world that such a courtesy is extended to women: and there is no surer evidence of mean frequentations than a disparagement of their wit, I say nothing of wisdom. This man, it seems had never spoken with any but plain home-spun bakers and spinsters, so would conceal his lack of address with a great display of male superiority.

For her part, Mrs. Agnes answered him very softly and showed him all possible deference. She was gentler and more thoughtful in his presence than I liked to see. I would fain have been a witness of her farewell to the Captain, who came home very late, because more is to be guessed at from one parting than from a dozen meetings, but I was

getting his horse out of the stable at the time; so had a miss of it.

Yet that these two would soon make a match, I had little doubt. This seemed indeed to be the stout mettlesome man hinted at by Calamy; here in truth was a husband she need not stoop to kiss; women love a master, I knew enough of the world to know that. So hour after hour of the night that followed this day of stress and trial, when I should have been sleeping and taking my rest, instead, my fancy was busy showing her to me in his arms, all her little mutinies and revolts that I thought so winsome quieted by the man's supreme strength, the passion of her vitality expanded in bearing him the little children who should by now have been clinging round such a woman's knees and at her breast; no, not one particular of their caresses and intimacy was I spared, but tossed from side to side, seeking rest and finding none, while hour by hour the thorn that was fastened in me drove deeper and deeper into my flesh.

Presently in the darkest hour, a little light broke in my soul, and a voice such as smoothed the waters spake in me and said:

"Richard, Richard, why struggle you thus, tearing your poor spirit, like to a sheep caught amid thorns. What is it you would have?"

Whereto: "Master!" said I, "behold a poor wretch parched with thirst whose lips Thou hast let once touch the waters and then hast plucked them away."

Then said the voice:

"Son, dost thou know to what waters thy lips were laid?"

"No Lord," said I, "only that they semed very sweet to me."

“Know then,” said the voice, “that they are the bitterest of any in the whole earth, bitter far beyond the lake wherein the cities of the plain are drowned. The face of them is foul with weed and scum; their bed is piled with men’s bones. From them when My last trumpet clangs, shall more dead arise than from all the oceans of all the world.”

“Oh then,” said I, “wilt thou not let me die to-night, since the waters others may drink are poison unto me. Thou hast forbid me the earth, how long wilt Thou deny me Heaven?”

But the voice spoke no more, so presently I fell asleep, and in death’s parable found a little of His peace.

CHAPTER VI

THE next morning as I kneeled by my bedside I resolved, with God's help, to begin my fight against temptation and to pull my feet out of the quagmire into which I had begun to sink. I looked so pale and heavy eyed from my watchings, that my mistress asked me very concernedly did aught ail me, and would have prepared me I know not what saving draught, but I was so sulky and ungracious that she did not long continue to press her civilities upon me. I contrived to be very seldom in the house all that day; there was a design of making some nests in the hen-coop that Mr. Fleming had bidden me see to a week ago, which I had put off from day to day ('t would be hard to say indeed how greatly this new habit of chatting with my mistress had begun to encroach upon my work, and I would think, with a pang, at night, when I examined my conscience after the manner prescribed us at Omers, how many wasted hours were gone in one day to be laid to my account, and resolve the next day to amend all, but 't would be the same over again), now I say, I took saw, rule, and hammer from the tool cupboard with a great bustle, and asked madam, keeping my eyes upon the ground, whether there was aught I could do for her before my departure.

"Your departure," she says, looking at me sharply, "where are ye bound for with your carpenter's armoury; are you off to found a new settlement?"

I told her of the design to put boxes in the hen-roost.

"Well," said she, "you can not make them to-day, I have much else for you to do."

I said 't was her father's wish, but she still would not have me go.

"I will compound it with my father," she said, "hath he not already told you to do my bidding?"

I would have said: "Oh! madam, madam! I ask nothing sweeter than to do your bidding always and in all things"; but in place of it, weakly told her that I had thought to pleasure her by furnishing the fowl-house, thus losing all the merit of my endeavour, and moreover telling a lie, for which I was sorry next moment, when she told me, more softly, that I might go.

The motive for my action, thus vitiated, there was nothing inspiring in the work itself which I had undertaken. The fowls flew out screaming into my face when I opened the door, like lost souls out of hell, besides, the place was so dark, I must go back to fetch a lanthorn. I tried to associate Calamy with me in the work, for he was a man of his hands, but he answered me only by groans, reaching out his hand, too, for his Bible, so that I had not the heart to withdraw him from that great work of preparing for his last end, which now, with meals and sleep, quite eked out his time.

I have little mechanical ability, and the irksomeness of the work was very great. I had to crouch on my back upon the filthy floor in order to reach the corners where the boxes were to be put, and not only did the acrid stench of the house, for it had not lately been cleaned, give me a great headache, but presently from little nippings on face and neck, I became aware that I was in a place most loathsomely infested by

lice, so that I soon had perforce to abandon my undertaking and go back crestfallen to the kitchen.

"What," says my mistress as I put up the tools on the shelf, "are the nests made already?"

I told her the house must be garbished before a Christian could work therein, and to-day my head ached me too badly to set to and clean it.

"I fear me you are sickening for somewhat, Richard," says she, "come, let me feel of your forehead": but I mumbled some excuse, and slipping out the door, was on my way to find work in the orchard, when as I past the kitchen window which was open, my mistress calls to me, more insistent this time, "Richard, come here to me, I say."

And when I went in. "Pull up my sleeves for me," says she, "they are nearly slipt down into the soap-suds."

"You will pardon me, madam," says I, "my hands are wet, too, with carrying of water."

"You lie," says she, looking at them, "you have packed none since dinner."

"Well," I said, "they are soiled from my labour."

"Are you crazed," said she stamping her foot. "Wipe your hands if they be wet and do my bidding without further words."

"Now," says I to conscience, "you see, I am put on obedience," but as a reward for my stoutness, she gives me a most happy advice, which was, when a thing were thrust as 't were into my very face, from the poison to suck an antidote, as now, when pulling up the sleeves, I could not help remarking the whiteness of Mrs. Agnes's arms, which was very wonderful, I recited to myself that beautiful little versicle from the psalm "Miserere" which is used in our service

before Solemn Mass. *Lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor*—Thou shalt wash me and I be made whiter than snow.

“What are you muttering under your breath, Richard,” says my mistress, seeing my lips move.

I blushed and looked very sheepish, but forget now what answer I made her. She turned right about from her work and looked me full in the face.

“I am sure you have been bewitched, Richard,” says she, “no man in his senses ever acted as you are acting. Tell me plainly, good man, are you ill?”

“I think indeed, madam,” I faltered, “that I am best in the open.”

“Then for God’s sake abide there,” she said, flushing angrily, “for a week I have had you round my skirts, so I could not move but your foot was on my gown: now it is with much ado I can get a civility from you. If you are a cavalier, I pray they send no more out to us.”

“Shame,” scoffs the devil, “ask her pardon, and play the man. Your scruples would be ridiculous in a monk.”

“Bravo!” says conscience, approving me. “Fight the good fight! time enough to talk of pardons when the victory is won. You are a beleaguered city, Richard, and these things which were lawful in time of peace are rank treason now. Therefore keep your gates close, and have a watchword at the postern.”

So sped some weeks amid these combats and outpost interchanges. I say not I always had the advantage; indeed, a pitiful thing to confess, ’t was far less my defeats grieved me than my victories, each one of which was gained at I know not what expense of my

self-esteem. I think I lost flesh, too; not an uncommon thing in sieges, and made no doubt I should be so worn and thin by the time the contest was over that not the most wandering eye of woman would ever fancy me again.

One other trouble I had at this period, which I shall never mention again, and would not now, only that you may know this torture was not spared me among the others. Almost from our first acquaintance, there lurked in my heart, like some monster at the bottom of a deep well, whose shape we know not, only hear the stir of him amid the shadows, I say there crouched at my heart, an horrible suspicion of this woman's chastity. Be patient with me; 't was all a part of that terrible initiation that "kultur" as the Germans say, of the cloister, that insight into fallen humanity that centuries of ministry have bequeathed us, which sends us priests forth into the world, innocent indeed as doves in the pratique, yet wise as serpents in the theory of evil, unfitted for common human intercourse, and dwelling in our vow of continency as in a desert. I saw the profuse nature of this woman, as greedy for caresses as she was lavish in giving them; I marked in her no evidence of any spirituality that might supply her with incentives to virtue, and I dared not think what temptations might not have assailed her during her ten years of widowhood. In this matter, indeed, it seemed my good and bad angels concurred for once, and testified against her. Said one of them:

"Mark well the woman for whom you are tempted to sacrifice your virtue and your vocation. Watch her wiles, they are those of an old huntress, vexed at the shyness of her prey. Love for you there is

none in her heart. Did you seek her there would be scorn for your portion. 'T is only because you flee from her, that her vanity is piqued and her toils laid around you. To those who love much, doubtless much is pardoned, but imagine not there shall be any mercy for you if you tumble into this mean ambush."

The other said:

"Where is the harm? 'T is against scandal, against the sin that ruins two souls to pleasure one that God's chastisements are threatened. If not you 't will soon be another; and there is enough of virtue in you quickly to rise from one fall, for where the heart is not intricaded, repentance is as easy and natural a motion to a man as disgust after surfeit."

I argued not with either of them. I neither refuted the thought with my heart nor assented to it with my head. I know not how it came nor when it left, only that one day the beast moved there in his accustomed haunt, the next love had driven him out, and henceforth nothing so monstrous, so vile, nor so unthinkable.

CHAPTER VII

SPRING wore on apace. Now the bull was done his roaring and the timid twins might roam our western skies unalarmed.

Little shoots of green began to kindle and flare in the dark forest relics, that stood around our home, like ghostly tapers in a ruined church; there were no Puritans among the flowers, and along the river where the salt meadows would soon be up to the cow's knees, clownsheel and hellebore stood ranked in rubrical choirs of lenten purple and Easter white.

There was behind the great house a little bluff over the river with a paling and steps where the garden ended, and a shelf of shingle below it upon which the Indians who came trucking to us with fish and hunted meat, beached their canoes of bark. The set of the current carried much drift wood there, not of any largeness but very fit for kindling when dried, and I had gone down there with my billhook to cut it up into lengths for drying in the oven.

It was an afternoon in early May, the sting gone quite out of the air, Pickosick ran swift and eager in his narrow bed, full of little cloud reflexes, like broken ice, from the dappled sky; the willows on the farther shore waved their tufts like priests blessing the arisen earth. I know not whether the sap of spring must reach even to my broken spirit, but I began to sing at my work, a

little tune I had caught from the peasants while on the Manx garrison:

Oh, irree shu gwyllin as gow she din clew,
Ta ny kirree fo' snethy va nin derriew.

The drooping sun threw the shadow of the paling on to the sand, and presently I saw my mistress was leaning upon it, and stopped my song, very like a servant caught rejoicing.

"I could not sing," said she when I had ceased, "with a collar round my throat."

"I pray none would be so ungentle as to put it there," I answered, not turning my head.

"The shame would choke it on my lips," she goes on, drawing her dress round her feet and coming down the steps, when I saw what was her business there. She had a white pullet in her hand which I had killed for her that morning and was come to pluck it, where she might cast the feathers on the stream.

"The shame is not mine," I answered bitterly, "but theirs who put it there, and theirs who leave it."

She settled herself upon a fallen tree trunk that went out into the brook, and began her employment, dipping her hand into the cold ripple when the feathers clung to it.

"At least, Richard," said she presently, "I would wish to know the name of your song. 'T is a pretty sad air."

"'T is one I learnt in my Douglas garrison, madam," I replied.

"In England!" says she, surprised. "I should have thought 't was Choctaw. And what may the burden of your song be, Richard? I'll warrant now 't is sung to an absent mistress."

I told her, pretty shortly, for I thought her interest in the song feigned, that I could not construe it for her, but believed it to mean that the sheep are lost in the mountains, and the shepherds must leave their feasting and go seek them.

"Which is a memento to myself," I added, rising, "that I also must to my work and carry in my kindling. Have I shaped enough for your present needs, madam?"

"Put by your hatchet, Richard," says she. "I wish to talk to you now on other than household matters. Nay then," for I kept hold of it, and began to collect the sticks, "if you will not do my behest upon breeding, I must put it to you on your indentures. You are my servant, are ye not?"

I could not say no.

"Well then," said she, "when I bid you work, you are to work — when I bid you stay you are to stay, and not presume to correct my housewifery."

I would have said to her:

"Oh, have mercy, have mercy! Is there no other quarry to your hand, free and bold, that can give you sport in the chase and credit in the capture, but you will pursue this poor captive that flutters with clipped wings round your yard and kitchen, this broken slave who hews your wood and fills your cistern?"

But instead, I dropped the hatchet and sate down again, with head bent, awaiting her will.

"There is another point," says she, "in which I would have your manners mended; which is, when I speak to you or you answer, that you should look me in the face. I like not this recent fashion of keeping your eyes upon the ground or the river."

I raised them now. Her own were blue, long and

full-lidded, with great lashes like tassels. The searching light of the spring day did but accentuate the fairness of her skin, the lustre of her hair and eyes. Desire of the flesh, and pride of life, will ye never leave a man except with life itself? Here was I, a poor slave, stricken in soul and body, broken by ten years of labour and sorrow, and I could not look on her but the blood must race through my veins, even as the sap through the branches above our heads.

For all that 't was she first looked away now, with a faint blush, and a kind of dawning trouble in her eyes.

"I began to think," says she, "that you had made a covenant with your eyes, like Shubaal, not to look upon a maid."

"Except through his eyebrows," said I, whereupon she laughed and both grew a little easier.

"Well, sir," says she, "I may tell you I am no maid, so your covenant is whole for me."

I stammered out that I had heard she was a widow.

"Who told you?" she asked sharply. "Was it my father or Calamy?"

"Indeed, madam, I cannot remember where I first heard it."

"I 'll warrant 't was Calamy," she said; "so stiff a Gospel tongue must needs wag loosely when you two are secure together."

"You are made no subject of discourse by me," I retorted hotly, for I had a little compunction here, as will be remembered. "I pray you," says I, "not to forget 't is to a gentleman you are speaking."

"Tut! tut! good man!" said she, somewhat disordered though at the reproach, "my desolate condition is no secret. Indeed," with a little sigh, and picking some of the white feathers daintily

from off her gown, "indeed I am much pressed of late to mend it."

"'T is a holy state, madam," said I awkwardly, not knowing what else to say.

"But a little suspected, you would add," stealing a glance at me.

We sate silent for a few moments; then said she, suddenly:

"I cannot be forever calling you Mr. Fitzsimon, and I like not Richard overmuch. Had you never a shorter name, from your kin or familiars?"

I told her I was called "Rick" at home in Ireland, Lord how strange the name did sound as I uttered it upon this foreign air, and where were the lips that had given me it last?

She liked not the poor ghost, and pursed her mouth at it, saying:

"It smacks too much of the farm-yard to me, Richard: What say you to 'Diccon?' 'T is an honest English ekename."

I told her I was well content with it: indeed off her tongue it came very prettily.

"Well then, Diccon," says she, "there was a question in my head to ask you. How old are you?"

I let her know I was turned thirty.

"And I must suppose, Diccon, you have had many sweethearts during your wanderings. 'T is a frailty of our sex to suffer willingly men of blood."

But I told her I had never had one, whereat she laughed very waggishly, and then expressed, or feigned, great surprise at the miss, and pity, too.

"How comes it, Diccon," says she, as tho' she would keep on using the word until 't was familiar on her lips, "how comes it you have escaped the fate of all flesh."

I blushed awkwardly at this, but told her my road had not lain where such pretty flowers grew.

"'T would be a libel on your charms, madam," I added, "to say the same of you."

"Lord! Lord!" she exclaimed, grown very serious of a sudden; "I could count a dozen broken hearts before I was turned sixteen. You must not judge me," looking askance, "by the poor relics you see to-day."

"I trust they gave you comfort, madam," says I, with a jealous pang.

"Oh! indifferent," she made reply, and began to whistle the air I had been singing very low and true.

Suddenly, and with a grace and lightness surprising in a woman so large, she got off the tree trunk and coming over to me caught at one of my hands.

"The time is come betwixt us two, Diccon," says she, while she still held it, and speaking a little broken as one that had been running, "the time has come when I must tell you all, or never again tell aught: and I would first discover if you be true."

I know not what woman's divination she used by my hand, her own was cold and damp as a paddock, yet I could feel the blood pulsing in its fingers. I said to her:

"Madam, as I sought not your confidence neither would I betray it. Speak while it eases you, and cease when it frets you."

She smiled a little ruefully: then sitting down by me on the wood-pile, waited awhile as though to collect her wits, and said:

"I suppose I am a fool to tell you aught, yet have I ever acted upon impulse, and something this afternoon bids me lighten my heart to you. I have just

now told you that when a maid in my father's house I had many lovers, indeed I would willingly have spared some of them to my homelier neighbours. I was not a forward maiden, any more than now I am a wanton woman as ye seem to believe me."

Here I vowed she had made a cruel mistake, and would have said more, but she stamped her foot on the shingle, saying:

"You must not interrupt me in my story, keep your absolution and homilies to the end, as ye were taught to do. I say I was noways immodest, yet it seemed there must be sighs and vows, burning flames and bleeding hearts for ever dinged into my ear, until, believe me as you will, I was cloyed with sugary mottoes, surfeited with sweet comparisons of my eyes and teeth and hair.

"There was one man came to my father's house different to all the others. You are to know we lived not then in the Connecticuts but at Roxbury, hard by Boston town. There was peace in England then and the times not so hard as now, and many strangers, traders or visitors out of Virginia or from England, came to that place, bringing letters to my father from his old friends. This man was a Virginian, Fernando Bartlett, his father had a great estate there as well as a great figure in the Company, and, being his only son, this man was esteemed a match and over-courted.

"He was of a Cavalier family, a black man, tall and slight of frame, with bold dark eyes and hair in ringlets. When my father told me there was a Cavalier officer come here as a servant, I imagined you could be like him, and marvelled to find you so gentle and mild-mannered, Diccon.

"This man acted not like any of the others. While

they were giving me their honeyed flatteries, for they did so to one another's faces, as I would favour none beyond the rest, so that there was a kind of rivalry grown up among them who should speak prettiest, he would only lean back in his chair, keeping his bold eyes on me, and laughing the loudest at their witty speeches, until I grew to have a fear of the man, yet was not altogether displeased, and perhaps thought the more of him because he was so debonair.

"One day, catching me by myself he comes up with-out a by-'r-leave, and clipping me round the waist kissed me full on the lips, nay, offered other freedoms saying: "None are ever good friends Mistress Agnes until there is a secret shared betwixt them, so here is ours."

"I was so took aback that for all my rage and shame, I could find no words to reprove him, only blushes, and at last a great fit of weeping, so that from that day he was my master. The other suitors left us one by one, scared away by his proprietary carriages until he was soon all the sweetheart I had.

"For a time I resisted him; there was that in the man repelled me even while it attracted me, and alone at my work, or in my bed o' nights, I would devise all manner of fine proud speeches to give him his dismissal in, yet when I was under his eyes could only babble or answer him like a fool.

"Now the greybeards began to wag in this business. 'Tis true friends of my fathers had, upon enquiry, given but a poor report of Fernando, that his youth had been wild and godless beyond the common vileness of men; but what so proper to ballast his manhood as a wife. I used to pray desperately, Diccon, in those days, for strength to do mine instinct justice, and send the man away. Perhaps he suspected my

feeling, and therefore committed the foul act that bound me to him forever."

At this point of her story, her emotion seemed like to choke her, and her distress became so great, that I begged her to desist and not tell me more or to tell it some other time.

"No, no, Diccon," said she. "I am gone too far on the road: all must bolt out now. But ere I tell you the rest, will ye do one thing for me."

And when I begged her to name her request.

"Will ye swear to me that you are no priest nor Jesuit as 't is rumoured."

I wonder the surprise on my face did not convince her, without any words:

"They lie," said I, "I am neither the one nor the other: nor worthy to be. Only a pupil at their colleges."

"Nay," she persisted, "but will you swear it. Swear it upon something that is most sacred to yourself."

I swore it on the Cross, making one on the ground at her feet, from two of the sticks I had been at cutting; but she said the Cross was far away.

"Take out the locket you shewed me, Diccon," says she, "and swear it upon the virtue of your mother;" nor would she be satisfied before I gave her this ridiculous oath.

"And now," said she, "while I tell you this part of my tale, you must not look upon my face."

I turned away my head, but she covered her face as well with her two bare arms. A heron rose screaming from the weeds on the other shore of Pickosick and trailed away across the sky to the forest, like a startled eavesdropper.

"That night," she went on, her voice muffled from under her arms, "that night he bribed my own Negro maid, hid in my chamber — Oh!" she exclaimed starting to her feet and flinging her arms abroad from off her burning cheeks, "what devil hath made me tell? What devil hath made me tell? None knew of it, not even my father, and now my name is at the mercy of an hired servant!"

I sought by all means in my power to soothe her anguish, forgetting or not noticing the wound to my own pride, in my distress at this revelation, and presently she sate down again, her face hard and bitter, older than I had ever seen it, and the grey lock shaken loose at the side of her head.

"Well master papist," she cries suddenly, "have you feasted your eyes enough upon me. 'T is a wonder you do not ask me why did I not cry out. And for whom? for my father?—who would have had us married that night with a curtain ring for my finger. The man was anxious, indeed, to marry me; this very means he contrived I believe many godly elders would have indulged him in. I will tell you something Richard, that I'll warrant they never taught you in your seminary. Love is a battle wherein the most brutal and least delicate will ever win. 'T is not a woman's fault but her composition maketh it so. Poor, plaintive souls like your own may sit by the river singing of love, for I believe not your tale of the sheep, but believe me 't is the lion and bull can tell you most of it."

I was shocked at her words. God knoweth, yet even then I felt their truth, neither have I ever since doubted of it.

"Well," she goes on, the passion now quite out

of her voice, "the man married me: that made amends, I suppose, for all. You are greatly shocked at my story, Diccon, ye think me mightily to blame in this business. Do not deny it," as I would have spoken, "I read it in your eyes."

"Madam," said I gently, "in the matter you have just confided I myself do believe you guiltless in God's eyes, though I must say it under correction."

"What mean you? under correction," she asked sharply.

"Why, madam," says I, "who am I to pronounce on the nature of sin? I am no canon penitentiary."

"I see," says she, curling her lip. "You mean there needed some ghostly father to weigh out my proper share of guilt. Go on, Richard," scornfully, "go on; always under correction."

"I say, then, madam, your will once overborne, that I think you as guiltless in God's eyes as a lamb with a wolf's teeth in her throat. But, that you should marry this man afterward who outraged you, this, I own, shocketh me out of measure."

She turned on me in a fury.

"You are a great theologian," she exclaimed, "and a great fool. Not marry this man! why in God's name who else should I marry or who else would marry me. The very law of the land — the very church assigned him to me as a compensation were all known. No. No. This man was too cunning. He might wear me now or fling me away. He was all I had to look to now for love, for cherishing, for all those things that are a woman's dream. Oh! 't is easy known that men made the law — but why do I tell you this, who have gone through life liker a blind kitten than a man."

"You do me a great wrong," I protested, "to rebuke me thus harshly. I swear to you there is naught in my heart for you but infinite pity."

"Fill it not too full," said she roughly, "for here's more to tell. My husband, through Sir George's influence, had a great plantation granted him in the new Maryland country, whither in time he took me, and we had a fine house and good service. But first we abode with his father, while all things were making ready, and I have no complaint to make of him during that time. 'Tis true his love was rough and overpassionate, but what man shall be persuaded this is a fault in a woman's eyes. As I tell you, he was now my sole dispenser and almoner of love, and I had been a fool to quarrel with him because he stinted it not. But there were two men, it seems, in his one skin; and when we got to the Maryland house, he was not behind hand to show me the other.

"How monstrous was his cruelty, Diccon, I despair altogether to convince you; men will not credit such things of men. 'Twas as though there were but these two elements in his nature, lust and cruelty, cruelty and lust, and I had them unsparingly each in its turn. I know not which I hated most, his love, Godamercy the word! because it must be followed by stripes, or his ill usage, because it would give place to a season of caresses."

I told her that the connexion between these two was a common place of philosophy, very proud to be able to propound this, after her speech about the kitten, which was hard to forgive.

"Will you hold your philosophy," says she, "until this poor tale is done? I say I might have sunk into my grave, beaten and kissed to death — dwindling

in the twin flames of his passions like a witch's wax doll, but for one happening.

"My baby was born and died, God and myself know why, and after it I lay ailing over long. There was a little coloured Indian wench, a maid of my own that I had taken into the house, taught English and to plain sew and embroider, and with whom I was very fond and indulgent. One night about six months after my baby's death, the poor soul was taken ill in my house, nay, in the very chamber next mine. I helped her in her trouble, for I pitied all women, and who was I to blame her? Her child was born — an hideous yellow monster, there was no doubt of the parentage. I taxed him with the crime and he was insolent. He said if he could not rear him heirs he might get him servants; he dared to tell me — he — that myself was not married a virgin.

"That night, Diccon, I left his house and went into the woods, I cared not whither nor considered to what end. I must suppose 't was not to die, for I carried a little parcel of food with me, but I never touched it. There was an hollow in the glade about half a mile below our clearing, where I had often been to pick mountain lilies, white and yellow, that grew there in great profusion, and 't was there the searchers tracked me two days afterwards. I heard my father's voice among those that raised me up, and thought we had died and were in heaven. He had arrived the night after my flight, the letter advising us of his visit, having gone astray, and when things were past concealment. As soon as I was recovered, he took me home, my husband imploring me for forgiveness on his knees, kissing my feet and the hem of my gown, weeping. But my good angel hardened my heart."

Her mood was now changed. She stood facing the river, the plucked bird hanging from one hand, the other at her eyes with a corner of her apron. She seemed to have forgot my presence, but I ventured to ask her what befell her husband.

"He was killed in the Indian wars the year after," said she. "'T was agreed we were to come together in a year, upon his reformation, and whether he indeed reformed, I cannot tell. His was a fearful death. I had it from a soldier who escaped. He took four days dying and at the end was liker a skinned hare than a man. And 't was all the squaws' doing. Oh! before he died he knew what torture meant, and at women's hands. God took my revenge upon Himself."

"Nay, nay, madam," said I hastily, and very shocked, "ye must not presume to judge nor to pry into God's vengeance. We are all alike under sentence, and unless we do penance, must all likewise perish."

"You are an incorrigible, canting rogue," said she, most measured and insolent, "take up your faggots and get into the house. I have kept you too long from your work."

Whereupon I left her, still staring upon the river, poor soul! as though she read what was to come in its waters.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE night that followed this disclosure of Mrs. Agnes there burst over our settlement so terrible a storm of wind and thunder that I was roused up from God knows what dreams of ancient days, to lie wakeful until morning, listening to the salvos of heavenly ordnance and the wailing of the buffeted trees, yet experiencing in my heart a peace to which it had long been a stranger.

That woman against whose image I must struggle throughout the day, and ask God to leave out of my dreams at night, now lay in my mind clothed in a new presentment: no longer a provocation to passion, but a sweet incentive to my pity and charity. That torn and bleeding heart which she had bared for me, I might now offer up to God along with my own, so desolate and orphaned. I thought to myself I even discerned in her the purpose of my banishment to this wilderness, the goal of my wanderings by sea and land, and that not more clearly did the lightning which from time to time illumined the interior of our poor hut, perhaps ensure some bewildered traveller of his way, than I now read the purpose of God's dealings with me in her regard. What could she know of purity, who had been the victim of a man's passion in her girlhood, of charity who mayhap even now carried the scars of his mishandling upon her tender flesh? It was for me to instruct her in both, to be dispenser of that knowledge of Himself with

which God had irradiated my soul in youth, to hand on to her the torch of that charity which alone can make clear the obscure maze of earthly happenings, to make Him sweeter to her than all created things. I remembered with a pang of self-reproach how I had struggled and battled for my own soul's safety, during these last weeks, never speculating into what a depth of despair and bewilderment another soul might be sinking before my eyes, and a great gush of pity and tenderness flooded it, sweeping out all hateful thoughts, as a street is garbished by a torrent.

I kneeled down beside my poor pallet and prayed:

"I will, oh, I will be faithful to this mission which Thou hast entrusted to me. I will come out of the fiery furnace of temptation, not in any selfish triumph, but leading by the hand this poor woman, so sinned against, whose soul is precious to Thee, precious mayhap beyond mine own, and for whom Thou wilt surely ask an account from me as well as from the others."

The thunder and lightning ceased with dawn, but the day continued very dark and tempestuous; when I went out to look to my horses there was the farm-yard full of pools of ruffled water, the trees aslant, and tender clusters of leaves scattered untimely upon the ground like Herod's massacred innocents. The river floated very turbulent and muddy, full of drift and bushes. When the farm hands came to work, 't was with great coats as in winter, blowing upon their nails, and with damp forelocks: they were sulky and silent, and hardly to be got away this morning into the field from Calamy's fire.

When the last of them was gone, be sure I turned to my work at the house full of a tender expectancy that I should see Mrs. Agnes while I carried in wood

and water. Yet she was not about, and presently I could find no other excuse to be round the kitchen waiting until her chamber door should open and she come out to greet me, so turned, somewhat heavy-hearted, to my other work.

A great trouble this morning was that the logs were so damp from the storm, it was much ado to kindle them at all in the grate, then only with such a fume that the wind driving down the chimney filled the room with it as with a mist, so that upon returning at last to the house from the yard, I did not at first see my mistress standing in the house-place. She was dressed all but her hair which she was finishing to coil upon her head, and had besides a wrap or shawl laid across her shoulders. She was pointing to the cistern.

"Who is to cook or scour with such nastiness?" says she.

I told her the river was in flood and very muddied and that even this water I had got only by venturing out on the log and nearly toppling into the stream, for one end of it was afloat.

"You should have brought it into the house early before your breakfast," she said, "that the mud might settle before my using it. Also" says she, thrusting open the window, "have ye none but drenched faggots, so that the kitchen must be foul as a stithy with their smoke?"

"The rain hath driven into the wood-pile, madam," said I, all took aback by this rough usage, "but belike I can find you drier."

"Yes," she said, "by the time dinner should be ready."

She put her hand to her head as though weary, a motion I had never observed in her till now. I think

she was ailing too, for there were dark shadows beneath her eyes that had not been there the night before.

"Why bring you not in the wood overnight?" she asked me fretfully.

I could not tell her that I had spent all last evening in an exaltation of soul, from her confession to me, searching Calamy's old Bible and racking my brains for comfortable texts to solace her with on the morrow. That day indeed already seemed as far away from me as any day of my old life and a new woman arisen to flay me with her tongue.

"I think," said she presently, thrusting me from the fire, which I was attempting to fan into a blaze with my hat, "I think that we are like never to have any comfort of you. You are a true monk, good only to gorge yourself and to preach"; whereupon I slunk away like a buffeted dog.

When I was in the garden again, it seemed as tho' all the trees were nodding their heads at me in derision and the pealing of the windy sky, a vast chorus of laughter to overwhelm me with shame.

"Well," says my head, "here is your fine forbidden fruit that was like to keep you awake with its seduction, none so fair and sweet after all ye see, but cankered and bitter enow at the core. And lucky are you Richard, to discover it so soon, before you had it on your loathing stomach. Let it now be a memory to keep you humble, whenever you are tempted to sacrifice your virtue for any of its kind; for even so shall all things one day appear to you, that were of the earth, and kept your thoughts from God."

"Nay," pleads my fond indulgent heart, "what is it but a woman? Be not over hasty to blame her. Look, see that river that was so clear and limpid, how

muddy and turbulent 't is grown with the storm to be. And think you the discovery made you yesterday, all that upheaval and stir of deep waters, is to pass in a night and leave no trace upon the clarity of her temper. Abide patiently a few days; meantime remember you are on trial. Abate not your kind words and actions, and if your cheek be smitten, why, turn it again."

Yet the next day was no better, nor the day after, and the weather cleared long before Mrs. Agnes's temper. I could do nothing aright: my clumsiness, the dirt upon my hands or face, my listlessness, my lack of address, which was not to be wondered at, and but an effect of my distress of spirit, all I say came by turns under the lash of her tongue. She hath often reached me suddenly a plate or pan and loosed her hold before I could catch it, blaming me for the downfall; nay one means of persecution she employed, so detestably ungracious and unwomanly, 't was long before I could believe it of her, and now cannot reconcile it with any other action of hers, for 't was one wherein not alone injustice, but meanness of spirit appeared; this was, to stint me of my food. both the kind and its quantity.

There was one dish of theirs called "Silpee" I never saw nor heard of but in these colonies, which I loathed above all; this is a meal as coarse as lint-seed, which they parch or fry in pans and store to one side; then put it into boiling milk, stirring it lest it burn, and when almost boiled, hang up high in a kettle until it thicken and curdle, and serve in a deep basin with a toast like white pot. I verily believe we had Silpee served to us for a week at dinner, supper, and breakfast, until even the old man begged her to stint it, and I

all this time could not take a spoonful of it but with a desire to retch, though the farm hands smacked it down with a relish; yet did I dare to leave any of it or of any other food that was not to my liking, Mrs. Agnes would gather her eyebrows and say to her father:

"Father! this coarse American food of ours is not to Mr. Fitzsimon's palate; his stomach is a very dainty one and I am hard put to pleasure it," then turning to me with a fine air of a puzzled housekeeper:

"Is there any of our poor dishes that you fancy Mr. Fitzsimon" (for I promise you 't was Diccon or Richard no longer), "'t is a very sore humiliation, sir, to a housewife to watch her providing thus misliked."

But if on the other hand there was by chance some dish that lay to my taste, I would be helped very sparingly, and if I came again:

"Despatch, father," she would cry, "despatch! Here is Mr. Fitzsimon helped already twice and he is like to clear the platter before you your plate."

All of which was a thing most intolerable and galling, and I wondered what depths of meanness I might yet find in her.

Thinking that perhaps 't was because I never complained or answered her, she was so bitter towards me, I made bold one day to retort upon her. After some speech uncivil beyond the ordinary, says I:

"I cannot think, madam, that your husband was a very wise maker of saws."

"My husband," she repeated once or twice, putting up her hand to her head, as one that would recall a dream, "my husband! how mean you, sir?"

"Why," said I, wishing now that I had not spoken, but stout to go through with it, "said he not that a

secret shared maketh friends; but ours seems rather to have bred enmity."

I had never seen her yet angered. Now she blushed a deep crimson, and stood pointing to the door, for some moments unable to speak:

"How dare you," says she at last hoarsely, "how dare you recall aught of that to my memory? Go to your house, and for to-day let me not see your face near me again."

Indeed, 't was with Calamy now I spent the most of my idle time. We were a strange fellowship. He with pipe in mouth lying upon his bed staring up at the rafters, where the smoke shadows from our pine torch shook and fluttered like bats: I sitting on the end of my truckle bed, my idle hands upon my knees, my head bowed and full of bitter, bitter thoughts: a great intolerable longing in my heart to be done with these shallows and sluggish backwaters of life, into which it seemed ever my fate to drift. Here were we, I often thought, two men of blood, who had taken by the sword and seen our slain, had tasted death and smelt of him; he for his heretical Bible, I for Holy Faith, and now the same fire warmed us, one torch lighted us, we put our hands into the same meal sack, nay, a thing more wonderful still, that very Bible that would once have driven us one at the other with thrusts and bullets, I was constrained to read him for mine own comfort in this captivity. Yes, I was now turned this old Puritan's gospeller, and many a text I preach upon to-day first found its way into my heart by his bedside, in the unstable light of a pine knot, so 't is enough for me to close mine eyes while I pronounce them, and I smell the resin and see the ribbed log walls.

That my mistress would soon be gone, I foresaw clearly. The captain was now at the house most nights in the week, and was made one of all their counsels. I heard only here and there a word as I served them or went about the house, for my mistress would put her finger to her lip when I entered the room, as though to say:

"Silence, while this dangerous fellow is around," yet enough to know that there was a design to found a new settlement up a tributary river to the west of the Connecticuts where Gideon had hunted and found the land open, and of a wonderful fatness. Of this exodus, he designed himself to be the Joshua, and I could not doubt, to take my mistress along with him.

"When she is gone," said my heart, "how will ye endure to live here, meeting her shadow round every corner, each time a door opens straining your ear to catch her footfall. The chickens will run to be fed, but 't will be another hand that throws them their grain. There will be clatter of dishes and pans in the forenoon, but your heart need not then to leap thinking: 'My mistress is about, and presently I shall see her, ay, though it be a dark averted face; hear her, though the words be uttered to wound me.'"

Thus through the perverseness of my nature, the very means God designed to wean me from her, bound me to her, and every sharp speech was as a thorn to fasten my heart the closer at her girdle. When they were withdrawn together after supper into the inner chamber, and I still about the house bringing in wood and water, I would dally over my work that I might hear her voice, her laugh, the play of her hand over her lute from within. I would lay my lips to the

latch her hand had touched, to her apron hanging upon a nail, nay to the floor where I had seen her stand at her household work. One night as I lingered, the door of the inner chamber burst open with a gust of light and sound, and my mistress came into the kitchen, laughing over her shoulder at those within. She started when she saw me, and put her hand to her heart.

"Richard," says she, "what keeps you so late at your work?"

I told her I had been bringing in wood overnight as she had commanded me, and had lingered to hear her play.

"Are you displeased with me," I asked her, "for doing it?"

"I was sore startled seeing you at the fire, Richard," she said, "I thought you were some ghost."

"I think I am grown to be a ghost," I told her bitterly, "but I need haunt your fireside no longer," and I made as if to go.

"I have broken a lute string," said she, "and am come to find another. Will ye please to light me while I seek it?"

I put a little pine flare into the fire, and followed her with it while she searched presses and shelves. When at last she had found it, she turned and looked in my face awhile.

"How thin and wan you are grown to be, Richard," says she at last.

I could not trust myself to speak.

"Tell me," says she, "do ye sleep well o' nights? I misdoubt you are a watcher."

"Indifferent well," I replied, swallowing in my throat, which irked me.

"I see your light burning very late into the night," said she, "what will you be doing?"

I told her I read Testament to Calamy, and spoke a little with him, nothing besides.

"You should sleep at night," says she, "else how will you work by day?"

"Indeed, madam," said I, "to-night I am too wearied to read."

"Get you to your bed then," said she, "and remember you are to sit up no longer. If you disobey me, I will come over myself, and take away your torch. These pine fumes are ill for the face, which they blench, and the eyes, which they redden, and I would not have your looks quite marred, Richard. And indeed I think the torch hath made my own eyes water," she adds, putting her kerchief to her eyes. But I think may be the waters sprang from a fount more generous. Alas! when were there ever wanting tears at the end to quench the embers that our own careless hands enkindle.

CHAPTER IX

NOW I am coming to tell of the thing which quickly put all design of flight from servitude out of mine inconstant crazy head, that is, to the kernel or pith of my story, wherein if some be disedified yet I doubt not as many others may find a poignant salutary lesson to themselves, no less than in those to which the general Christian world is piously invited in such scandals and lapses, as of Saul and David, of Solomon; men who walked and talked with God, and had at one time their names writ into the Book of Life by His own hand, and sure if any might have felt assurance of predestination 't is these: yet of the three 't is doubtful if more than one worked out his salvation, him the midmost, raised up by God's all powerful grace even as myself, to be the hope and pattern piece of all penitents. So of the Apostles — that awful tradition of Judas is hid under no bushel, neither the shameful weakness of Peter, though it may well have happed, that many a lukewarm confessor hath excused himself upon Simon's plea, or fearful sinner taken his life upon the despair of the Iscariot.

Is the Bible indeed aught save one long narrative of man's sin and God's judgments thereupon, from that first fall of our common parents, to the last admonition from Patmos? Even so, if in this confiteor not only the transgression be shewed but also its fiery penalty, nay, if I declare unto all men, how from the first the forbidden fruit was a dead-sea apple unto me, so that

it might be said the devil played a double deception with me and saw me thrust forth from the Eden of my innocence with ashes in my mouth, I say then: who shall convince me of scandal, even if in my unsmoothed narrative, here and there some splinter chance to stick into a tender fist?

On the day following this last conversation with Calamy I was taken by my master to the field to supply one of the hinds that was sick, so that when I returned home in the evening I must fly to my household work, which had not been touched in my absence. Of the six cows I could find only four in the pasture, of the other two no account from the Negro lasses, except that they had been there at mid-day, so mounted my little crop-ear, not waiting to saddle nor bridle him, and galloped down the river, lest they should have gone beyond the fence and over the ford into the brush, for there was just then a bull clicketing on the farther shore with most seductive bellows.

There was at this spot where the woods yet lay untouched, a deserted hut, where an earlier pioneer had lived and died, 't was said tragically, and reputed to be haunted; so that none would venture there after dark, though a ford lay from the hut, and I oftentimes, passing by it considered, what a gourd is human life, when in this settlement not yet twenty years planted, was already ruins and a ghost. I had got to this ford, and finding our gate open, was about to cross the stream and go seek them, when I saw my mistress come out of the wood, driving the two cows before her, and riding a great stallion we had brought from Boston.

"Stand away from in front of them," she called, imperiously, waving her whip. (Lord! Lord! how

I see her to-day, and hear the swirl of the water against the beasts' legs, and smell the weedy river.) "Stand away from in front of them and shut the gate after I am through. We shall soon not have a hoof of stock left upon the farm, through your remissness over the gate."

I think she would have offered other injuries, but that the great stud horse plunged and reared, requiring all her strength to hold and guide him. I made the posts fast, which were down through no fault of mine, and rode slowly after her, a scarecrow figure, I make no doubt, with my legs dangling near to the ground over the pony's flanks, sick and hot of heart at her injustice.

She had turned the point of the trees some time, and I following at a foot pace, when I heard a cry and a thunder of hoofs on the heavy soil, and saw the great sire, his bit betwixt his teeth, in full career to the fence. My mistress' face was the colour of ashes; she sate him bravely pulling upon his mouth with all the length and strength of her arms, but 't was to no avail, and I could see she would presently be at the fence, crushed against it or flung off and belike impaled.

"Keep him away from it," I cried, "or give him his head and let him leap!"

She had the sense left to turn him aside, but the stallion was now wild at her handling, and rearing into the air, began to race in a perimeter. I dug my heels into my little horse's ribs; he was old and it seemed would never gather way upon him to catch up the other, but presently, by God's grace we were at the stallion's head, nigh enough for me to reach out and catch him by the bridle, putting two fingers

into the snaffle ring. The mighty beast reared and jerked me from my brave little steed, dashing me to the ground once and again. I was near stunned, but happily 't is in the nature of horses, with much else, to pull back upon a weight at their heads, so that he checked his course, giving Mrs. Agnes time to get off of him, and presently I was dragged again to my feet.

"Give me your whip," I cried furiously, "and stand away from him!"

She handed me the whip and I vaulted into her saddle. Whether the sire was wearied or now felt a man's hand at his reins, I know not; but I soon had him sweating and quelled, though I beat him over the head with the whip, until his great eyes, rolled back, begged me to desist.

I halted him to the fence with the rope from my own pony, and began to unsaddle him.

"Who put this little light woman's bit in his mouth?" I asked her.

"Scold me not, Diccon," said she with her hands clasped, trembling and all but in tears. "Scold me not! I am frightened near to death."

"Who put it on him?" I persisted.

"Indeed, indeed," said she, "I could see you nowhere, so asked one of the lads to bridle him."

"Let them mind their ploughing and hoeing," said I; "henceforth you are not to ride unless I first order your horse for you. Do ye understand that?"

"I promise, Diccon, I promise," said she weeping, "do not upbraid me longer."

I shifted saddle and reins to the little horse, put her up, and began to twist the rope round the sire's nose for a bridle.

"You are not going to ride him thus, Diccon," she said, "without saddle nor bridle. Oh you will surely be killed."

"You have just now seen," says I proudly, "how I value my life."

She went on crying into her handkerchief, quite shaken and melted by her danger.

"Besides," said I, catching her arm, "look, see! he is dangerous no longer. His moment of madness is over and he remembers he is but a poor broken servant. And others must remember it no less. Madam, I ask your pardon for my words to you of just now. In one of my condition they were an extreme impudence."

"Shame, Diccon, shame," says she hotly, "to be so bitter."

I laughed. "If the great horse had trampled me," says I, "would ye have taken the collar from my neck before they buried me."

"I do not know, Diccon," says she, her eyes growing soft, and looking far off. "I think I should have taken it from your poor bruised neck, and oh! sir," clasping her hands, "if there were your blood upon it, would have worn it round my own, until I died, an old grey woman."

I could not speak, but stood swinging the end of the halter-rope.

"Oh, sir," she broke out presently, "methinks you wear your collar too hardly. You know not what a protection those letters on the tally are to you; while you wear them you are a part of us, and none can injure you that would not injure us also. Besides," says she, looking at me a little sidelong, "whatever is my father's is mine, so you are my servant, and

your hateful collar my livery. Are ye ashamed to wear that, Diccon?"

I told her, looking upon the ground, that my shame was, I was so little ashamed of it. She laughed, the colour returned to her cheeks, and the malice back into her eyes.

"You are too subtle a sophister for me," said she, gaily, and then: "Richard, what think you in your heart of me?"

"To my heart you have not got, madam," said I, lying, "but in my head I think you a very fair-featured and sometimes a fair-spoken woman."

"And sometimes, Richard?"

"Oh!" says I, "bitter as your own New England winters."

"We must have the change of seasons, goodman," she said, tickling the crop ears with her whip, "none would love summer but for the winter."

"'T is a bitter season for the poor and naked, madam," said I.

We were silent a space, and then:

"Richard," said she, "just now you said I had not found the way to your heart. Tell me," drawing the lash through her lips, "is it a very difficult one?"

"'T is a dark ghost-haunted road," I told her, "all choked with brambles and littered with dead men's bones."

"No matter," she answered briskly, "'t is our daily task here to clear the wilderness. And now, measure for measure, would you know what I think of you in my heart?"

"An it pleasure you, madam."

She drew the glove from one hand and, holding it towards me:

"I think you a gallant gentleman and cavalier," she said softly, "and remember you in my poor prayers."

I took her hand and covered it with kisses, not only the back, as is usual, but I turned the palm, a little hardened with her work, and she let it lie across my mouth.

"Last week," I could not help but say, "you told me I was a gross monk, good for naught but to stuff myself and preaching."

"You are good for much else, Diccon," says she; "you must not remember my ungentle speeches thus against me. That was not well done, sir."

"Also," says I, "you forbid me recall your gracious ones, so I am hard put to it how to remember you at all."

She laughed.

"You grow witty, Diccon; adversity hath sharpened your wits. And now," says she, but did not take it away, "let me have my hand: I see my father riding round to the stable, and I misdoubt there is company with him."

I let go her hand and vaulted on the stallion, ready, it seemed, to ride Bucephalus.

"Do not milk the cows, Diccon," says she, riding off, "I will bid the lasses do it, but do you come into the house to supper when you have bestowed the horses."

I found the pony hitched near the barn, and, going into the stable to put both away, there was my master looking at the hoofs of his beast who had gone a little lame, and asked him should I help him.

"No sir," says he, "but go, take my sword into the house, and tell them that I will presently be in, too."

I went on into the house, there were none in the house-place, but voices from the inner chamber, the door of which stood ajar, and presently my mistress saying:

"Let be, sir! unhand me, or I call my father!"

"Why, ye are very coy for an old experienced woman," said the captain's voice. "I was not told 't was a green maid I was to come courting."

There was the rumour of a struggle as though he offered her some rudeness. I pushed the door open and walked in, time enough to see him let her go, very ruffled. I walked down the room, until I was between them, then, looking him very square in the face, turned on my heel to her and said:

"Methinks you called me, madam."

"Not so, Richard," says she, settling her hair, "only to know whether my father be coming in."

"He will be yet some minutes in the barn," said I, "but meantime, is there no service I can render you?"

She shook her head and the captain eyes me over with the deadliest hatred and contempt upon his face, as of a man devising what insult he might best offer. Presently he found one to serve, and dropping down upon a chair, thrust out his great booted thigh to me, saying:

"Pull off my boots!"

I turned all ice and fire within, like a volcano under a glacier, and he never knew how near the sword that was in my hand came to be sheathed in his bowels. My mistress had turned away to the window, but I imagined I saw the colour that suffused her face and neck, and felt all her shame as well as my own. I suppose he had remarked her favour to me, though God knows this had not lately been apparent, and was minded to humble us together.

I laid the sword down upon the table and said to him:

"Will you wait a little, sir, until I put on my apron?"

"I see not much to spoil," says he, eying my poor clothes, "but despatch! despatch!"

I tied on the apron very carefully, and took his foot in my lap: he seizing the back of the chair to brace himself withal. When I had shifted enough to get a purchase on the toe of his boot and the spur, I gave a quick turn to my wrists, which flung him, chair and all, on the ground. The giant fell with a mighty crash, shaking the very rafters and jingling every pot and pan in the next room, and the plates set upon the table.

He was on his feet in a moment, thrusting back his toe into his boot.

"Clumsy knave!" he shouted, "I will give you for that piece of work such a thrashing as shall break every bone in your damned Jesuit's skin." But I had my master's sword out by this time, and he must come at me along the length of it.

"Call me not clumsy, sir," said I, "'t was a pretty trick I think, and deftly done. And now if you will cease swearing like a carter and draw your own sword, I think there is enough light outside for me to shew you yet others, in which I warn you, you shall find me very apt."

Perhaps he was a coward (all bullies are not) and saw his death in my face. Perhaps his head cooled his blood and shewed that small credit would accrue to him from a contest in which, whatever the issue, awkward questions touching his own conduct might be asked, and answered. Which ever way 't was, he pushed back the sword he had started to draw,

and turning to my mistress, said, not without a certain dignity:

"Will you make my excuses to your father, Mistress Agnes, and tell him I must sup at home to-night. I like not to stay in a house where the servants are such unbridled spadassins."

To me he said:

"You think yourself doubtless a fine figure of a man, as ye stand there with one hand on your hip, and your master's sword in the other" (for I promise you I kept hold of the sword). "Well, sirrah," says he, "if 't is postures you love, perhaps I can give you one, and where there shall be plenty to see it. Be very circumspect, Mr. Fitzsimon, look that your foot slide not, I am a magistrate, with a very great interest in you henceforth."

"Oh, sir," said I, but my heart sank, "threaten not. Threatened men live long."

"Ay," said he, "and some may wish they had been brisker dying."

And with that passed out of the room and the house.

When he was gone, I turned to my mistress. She still stood at the window, weeping silently as women will who are made witness of men's naked passions.

"Come hither, mistress," says I.

She dried her eyes and came and stood before me like a little reproved child.

"Twice to-day," I told her, "I have rendered you a service which in no way lay to my indentures, and for them I am going to take payment from you in the sort I like best."

So saying, I put up her chin with my finger and kissed her twice on the lips, lightly enough, but I was

not prepared for the passion with which she returned the caress, and I suppose was visibly taken aback, for she broke from me crying.

"Will you never learn your place?"

I asked her if she would have had me pull off the captain's boots.

"I would have you," said she, "not to make an enemy of a man that can one day take your life from you."

I laughed:

"Fear not!" said I, "I could spit him at the third pass."

She made a hopeless gesture with her hands.

"Oh," says she, "I despair altogether of your wits. What!—do you fancy you are in Alsatia now, or in one of your Italian taverns with your talk of spitting and passadoes? Do ye think this man aims to fight with you? Why, he is a magistrate, he can put you in the stocks for a rogue and a vagabond, whip you—cut the ears from off your crazy head."

I swore: a terrible soldier's oath to use before a woman. "And I will bite the nose from his face in his own court-house and spit it down his throat."

She put her hands to her ears, then curtsied.

"Reverend father," says she, "we thank you for your homily upon humility and forgiveness of injuries."

I think this speech of hers angered me beyond anything she had said yet.

"Call in your father," says I, "call in your father and see if I will not pull off his boots."

"Oh! my father's," she repeated, and went laughing into the kitchen.

I know not what account my mistress gave her

father of this day's happening, nor indeed if he ever knew of more than the half, but throughout supper he was very civil and kindly observant of me, and at the end, before I rose up to clear the table:

"Mr. Fitzsimon," says he, "my daughter tells me you have to-day rendered us a very signal service, for which I know 't would be an insult to yourself, sir, to offer you aught beyond our grateful and most heartfelt thanks, which be assured are yours. But there is one little matter in which I would like to service you, the more so as you must now begin to regard me as not only your master, but your very good friend, too; a certain removal," says he, "which may be a help to this conception. Lean over toward me, sir, and do not move lest I wound you."

With this he took a sharp knife from the table, and severed the collar that was on my neck, smiling on me very kindly as he did so. My heart was so moved, I could find no words to thank him with, and was glad that my mistress said sharply:

"I think, father, you have erred in severing it thus irremediably, and think 't was enough, to have taken it off only during Richard's good behaviour, lest slipping the collar he also slip the leash."

Neither would she leave the collar in her father's hand, saying he was too indulgent a keeper to be trusted with it.

"Heart!" said the old man, "cast it behind the fire."

But she would not, and put it into her bosom.

Later when he would have bidden me good night, I asked him, shamefacedly enough, if I might not stay to prayers with them, since 't was the Sabbath eve, to which he assented very heartily, making no

reference to my old scruples, and handed me his Testament at the end to read a chapter as was their custom.

I know not whether it fell out by accident or his design, but the chapter was that in which our Saviour tells us the parable of the profligate son, who, afar off in a wild, friendless country, cast longing eyes back at his father's house, and as I read, my heart was like to burst, thinking how in my regard, that house was vanished off the earth, how never again in this world should a voice call me son again, but all the old tenderness, that was once my due and birthright, I must now wander over the earth seeking at the careless hands of strangers.

I must suppose that something of all this got tonight into my voice, for long before the close of the chapter my mistress rose from her knees and passed, weeping, from the room, and the old man, when he said good night, laid both his hands over mine in a very eloquent silence.

When I had closed the door I stood awhile in the porch to allay the fever in my cheeks with the freshness of the night air, and to get my disordered thoughts into rank by the measured wash of the river. Suddenly from the darkness there was a pair of arms around my neck and my mistress's head upon my shoulder. This time I did not resist, but gave her back kiss for kiss, on her lips, her cheeks, her eyes, still moist from their weeping. My doubts, my scruples, my restraints were now a panic-struck flying horde, the rumour of their rout fainter and fainter each instant. Later on, I knew but too well they would reform, and a grim battle ensue, but to-night 't was sweet enough to love and be loved, to be victor or vanquished, I cared not which, so I was in my mistress's arms at last.

"Whither are you bound, Richard?" says Conscience to me, plucking at my sleeve as I shut the garden gate.

"To bed," says I, "and a truce to you for to-night."

Meanwhile he molested me no more just then, for he is a crafty old warrior, knowing well the season for approachments and retreats, fallings on and fallings off; full of feints and ambushes, and the more merciless a victor, the longer he be resisted.

CHAPTER X

ON THE next morning when she came downstairs dressed for meeting, there were no more hard words to me as I half hoped there would be, instead she came over and kissed me very simply and affectionately upon the mouth, so that I must needs return the caress in kind. This indeed was to be the trouble with me henceforth. She could not guess, nor could I tell her, in how terrible a coin I must pay for these kisses, at night, in bed, in the wakeful solitude of my own chamber. During the day, indeed, the warmth of her presence melted my scruples one by one, until at night when we said our sham good night, and she stole out to meet me under the scented shadow of the orchard trees, there would be passages as ardent as ever the moon winked at; whispered adorations, lips and hands loth to part; all the extasies and tortures of furtive congression.

I used to hate the hour of going to bed, and by every means in my power seek to defer it, talking with Calamy, reading the Bible, whereof some passages blazed forth with a new and terrible distinction. But presently the old invalid would weary, would turn from his aching back to the wall with a groan; then, no sooner the torch quenched and I in bed, then out from holes and crevices, where I had thrust them, my fears and scruples would swarm like the rats in the Marshalsea, and begin to gnaw my heart.

I tried, be sure, to put them off with sophistries;

torn to shreds as soon as uttered; these scarcely stayed their teeth an instant.

"After all," says I, "a kiss or two is no great matter. I find no Scriptural warrant against them either in old or new. God knoweth there is no desire in my heart towards ill!"

"No, no," replies my terrible taskmaster, "such lying quibbles may serve for others, but not for you, rather you know well each one is a step leading you down further and further into the pit and away from grace — poisonous honey that destroys the reason when you have most need of it. If you cannot deny them to this woman now when your passion is as a babe born yesterday, how will you deny her other things when these tendernesses shall have nourished it to a giant, strong enough to tear your soul in pieces."

It ended always in the one way, by my promising amendment before I closed my eyes. I dared not go to sleep unjustified, 't was too appalling a risk I ran of dying in my unconsciousness. Once, indeed, I did dream I had so died, and with so horrible a preciseness of conception, I still think I may have gone part way, and been nearer hell than any living man.

First I dreamed that I had sinned, yes, fallen to the lowest depth, and had the mire not only on my feet but on lips and arms and breast. From this luxurious dream methought I woke to find myself as in the old trances, cold and unable to stir: "Wait awhile," thinks I, "'t is but a dream I have had before. This will pass as did the others," so waited patiently. But it did not pass, so that presently I was so affrighted the hair rose on my head, and my eyes protruded, cold as ice. "What," says I, in an

horror unspeakable, "am I truly dead?" "Yes," says a voice at my muffled ear, "yes, you have died at last. There is no more help, contrition is worth nothing now. Presently will come the judgment, and hell to all eternity." "Oh, let me have my life again," I wailed, "it shall be spent in one long crucifixion to atone." "Too late," says the voice, unchanging as a passing bell, and I imagined I heard a vast unnumbered concourse take up the cry as from some place far within the bowels of the earth and repeat, "Too late!" when with a great leap comes back my soul into my body, and I awoke, giving so loud a cry, that old Calmay sate up in his bed, saying:

"Are ye hag-ridden, Simon?" But jumping out of bed I ran over to him all a muck of sweat, and kissed his foul bristly cheeks because he was a living man.

Calamy said that witches were abroad, flying over the houses on brooms, and named one old dame in Summerfield whom he had long suspected of sorcery: and after this supernatural horror, his silly hobgoblin tales were the cheeriest hearing ever I had in all my life.

'T is a wonder to me now, looking back upon those days, to think how upon one shift or another, I managed to get more or less of sleep each night. I have sought sometimes when my pie-crust resolutions could no longer dupe even myself to watch a whole night, but be sure sooner or later I fell asleep, and presently would be sitting up in bed, the cheerful red morning sun looking in upon me through our little lattice, and another night's terrors behind me. At first, I would make at least a pretence of keeping my good resolves: but there came a day at last when I made them and broke them as a matter of course, and

would laugh, poor blasphemous fool, when I awoke, to think how I had tricked God into giving me another day.

As may well be imagined, these later struggles wasted my frame no less than the earlier ones, indeed, I may say, for every ounce those robbed me of, these took a pound; but such ravages of my charms availed me nothing with this woman, instead it seems I rose infinitely in her esteem by my heavy eyes and wasted cheeks:

"Never in my life," she told me one night, "was I deceived in any man as in you, Diccon. I imagined you a sluggish, lymphatic lover, whereas love preys upon you and consumes your poor frame like a raging fever. 'T is like cowpox, I suppose, taken latest 't is taken hardest. Must I cure you, heart?" says she, putting the hair off my forehead, which I was letting grow again for her whim, "indeed, I think I must cure you, or your death will be at my door." Whereat I shuddered in every limb.

My mistress suffered none of these qualms. Instead, she laid on flesh, her cheeks were now rosier than before, her eyes aflame, and suffused with a glistening humour, the *cos Amoris* of the ancients, even her hair it seemed to me grew more lustrous and abundant. 'T was a constant wonder to me, watching her at our first greeting, her cheek flushed from the pillow and her eyes a little clouded with dreams, to think: here were we two, Christians both, with the same immortal destinies and awful responsibilities, a like precept laid upon us both to deny our fallen natures, yet towards its infraction she could look with healthful dreams, and songs and laughter upon her lips, while I was torn betwixt my desire and my apprehension

as between wild horses. It was, perhaps, something more than a fancy with me that in this commerce of our arms and lips the life was drawn out of me and into this woman, and that I wilted and waned for her cresgency.

It was now, in the season, between hay harvest and corn harvest, the days hot as the tropics, the nights starless, soft and close as velvet, that Mr. Chapin's great house this side Summerfield was finished, and there was to be an house warming and hanging of the crane, with I know not what loutish festivities: forfeits for the lads and lasses, Scriptural divination betwixt true loves, dancing and the like, upon which I doubt not some of the wry mouths in Boston would have poured their astringency, but we were far from them. My mistress was eager for this entertainment as a child, put us all on short commons while she ordered her wardrobe, and came forth from her chamber in the afternoon, very magnificent in a gown of dark green satin and a cap and collar of Mechlin lace, so that I was permitted only a very respectful salute, and kept at arms' length, lest my ardour should ruffle this array.

But alas! to mar all now arrives a sad *disgrazia*, as the Italians say. Her father suffered at times from an ailment which riding irked, and to-night was not to be drawn from his Calvin and elbow chair. The farm hands were all dismissed, the nighest neighbours doubtless already gone, and he would not suffer her to go unattended.

"Why should not Richard go with me," says she, with her finger at her lip, very rueful for this interruption to her pleasure; indeed, 't was a wonder in a

woman of her age, in whom one would think the first zest for pleasure would have passed.

"I think it not well for Mr. Fitzsimon to spend so many hours in Summerfield alone," says Mr. Fleming, from which speech I imagined he was advised by now of my quarrel with the captain, and his good intentions in my behalf.

"What harm can come to him?" says the woman ('t is hard not to say the girl for she looked not twenty in her finery), "what harm can reach him, if he mind his office and stay with the horse. 'T will be near dark when we arrive, and all cats the same colour."

My master consented to indulge her, but charged me straitly not to stray around the town, and above all not to go into any tavern, while his daughter flung her arms round his neck, and bade me, with heightened colour, not to be above five minutes shifting my suit and putting on my great boots. My blood was all aflame at the thought of our long journey together. She had never ridden pillion with me until now, and I already felt her breath upon my neck, and thought how near our lips would lie. Yes, unto this depth had I descended, this far along the flowery path my feet had journeyed; my concern was no longer how to avoid sin's occasions, but how to improve them: and if I watched and prayed, 'twas lest temptation might be to hand and I have a miss of it.

She got up behind me dressed in a riding cloak and hood of red camlet and a fox's broom in her hand to keep off the mosquitoes or great gnats which are an intolerable pest in this country, especially near rivers and at sunset.

We had little opportunity for intimate speech,

going towards Summerfield, for the track was full of folk bound for the house-warming: lads with their sweethearts behind, for they may ride about thus during the period of courtship without any duenna or discreet old person, a strange licence, I think, and hardly to be defended. The married women were commonly pale and worn, and not one without a child in her arms or at the breast.

My mistress spoke to all the madams kindly, asking after their families and ailments, but I thought they answered her shyly. The girls nudged their squires and whispered, looking back at me roguishly. I thought some of them handsome, clean-limbed wenches, and perhaps I was a little sad I was not going to be in among all this jolly company, but my mistress pitied me not, only bade me pull my hat over my eyes and look between the horse's ears.

There was good store of beasts tethered outside Mr. Chapin's by the time all the guests were arrived and I had infinite leisure to count them over if I wished and be sure of the number, for the five or six hours of my watch passed very heavily indeed. It seems I was the only man in Summerfield not in at the house-warming. I had brought some tobacco leaf with me and a pipe old Calamy had given me from a store of strange things he kept under his bed; 't was carved by an Indian from stone to the exact model of a Broseley clay and burned tobacco very sweet and cool. For diversion when my stomach tired of smoking I might also watch the figures of the house warmers passing a little rift in the curtains and try to distinguish my mistress, or listen to the gigglings and tee-hees of the girls, and the scraping of their squires' heavy shoes as they scuffled through

their games and dances. They had these, and music too; there was an old Indian piped for their dancing called by them Robin but his own name Queasy, who played the fiddle excellently well, for they have a pretty ear in music, even though his instrument was a poor ill-turned thing strung with deer-gut.

Sometimes, for 't was a close night, the younger guests would come out of the house into the road and the girls sit whispering together, while their cavaliers entertained themselves with horseplay and wrestling or made tip cats of the sawn ends with which the road was still littered. I sate in the shadow among the horses, so that none spoke to me nor molested me; none the less their uncouthness was an affront to me, and 't is a strange consideration to me that my heart could scarce have been angrier and hotter from real insult than it was from these imagined ones.

I watched the door pretty closely to see if my mistress would come out, and saw her presently with the red cloak thrown over shoulders. I made sure she had come to call me in, for I had gone supperless to bring her, and half rose as she stretched forth her arm, but 't was only that she might be sure it did not rain. The great bulk of Gideon came at her back, nearly blotting out the light and they two came together down the board walk. Thinks I, the rift between these two is healed again, which was not a pleasant morsel under my tongue. No sooner had they passed out of earshot than other tongues began to wag, so that I got up from among the horses' legs and strode up and down the road, in my long boots and hand on hip, which soon stopped them; they were ill at ease it seems with my shadow over them, and presently one of the boys cries: "Who is for the house, lads,

and another tune from Robin?" and in they all ran, the girls screaming and pushing for their partners.

My mistress was long in coming back, and soon that tiger which is never far from a lover's heart, and nearly always God's punishment for unlawful love, began to roar in mine. I took one of the pistols out of its holster and having seen that 't was loaded and primed, thrust it down my right boot and walked softly down the village street. This was not built like ours at home in England, house against house, but each stood by itself with little palings round it, and in between already a deal of young timber was sprouting, where the forest had been cleared away but the land not tilled.

It was a still windless evening, the moon only now beginning to rise from a great bank of cloud, weak and waning. There was not a sound to hear save now and then a house dog barking, uneasy for his absent master. I stole around the houses light footed as an Indian, my ears alert for the murmur of voices, my eyes dilating as though they would pierce the shadows, my fingers tapping the cold butt of the pistol.

I had reached the middle of the town next the river and was gazing at a great bulky timber house, built of cedar trunks and strong as a stone castle, with a low pitched roof and dormer windows, very handsome in the moonlight, when a rough hand was clapped upon my shoulder, and a rough voice bids me give an account of myself. I told the watchman, for he had an halbert and a lamp, that I was Squire Fleming's serving man come with my mistress to the supper. He put his lanthorn up into my face but molested me no more and I then asked him, to make

conversation, what was the great building at which I was looking.

"'T is a fort and a prison," says he, "to keep bloody Indians safe out, and bloody papists safe in, if need be."

I thanked him for his civility but told him 't were well done, to keep bloody Indians out, if some of the scrub were cut down between the houses, for there was enough to give three regiments ambush, and this little chance rencounter and speech was remembered sorely against me one day, as ye shall hear.

When I got back to the Chapin house the folk were already at leaving, but no sign of my mistress. I might know she had returned, for the captain made his farewell presently with a great waft of his hat and tramped down the plank walk, shaking the earth with his spurred heel. One by one the others departed till I was left sitting by my horse alone and very hungry and angry.

Only one gave me good night, that was Queasy the crowder, an ungainly figure in his English clothes with his fiddle tucked under arm, indeed the motive for his civility was quickly to be seen.

"Robin's belly hungry for um tobacco," says the creature, laying his hand upon it. "Too much squaw in new house, no smoakum. What cheer?"

I filled my pipe and handed it to him. He smoked unlike an Englishman, that is, he would draw in a great breath of it until one would think him like to burst, then expel it from his lungs very slowly with many contortions of pleasure.

"Why not you in house all night?" said he presently, tapping me on the chest, "eatum, drinkum all can hold," and, indeed, his stomach was bulged to a degree

that betokened a voracious meal. These poor creatures, living by the chance of the chase, have not that assurance of their daily bread that has taught civilised man moderation in eating. With them 't is stuff or starve.

"Oh," says he presently, looking keenly at me. "Queasy knows you now; you much hoggerly (very angry), you Mr. Fleming's servant Simon, wear collar on neck, do squaw work: ho! ho!" 'T is impossible to transcribe on paper that mirthless and sardonic laugh, bitterer than a curse, more tragical than tears. I felt a strange warming of the heart toward this poor outcast.

"Listen, Queasy," says I, falling into his own disjointed way of speaking, "my tribe is conquered, my chiefs killed, and I a prisoner."

"How," says he in surprise, "you are no Yenghi?" (Englishman).

I told him I was an Irishman, and he tried vainly twice or thrice to repeat the word.

"Mach it" (it is no matter), says he at last, "Simon and Robin all same prisoner, all same want to cram (kill) Yenghi."

At his words and even more at the furious gesture of his arm that accompanied them, expressing as no actor ever shall do it, all the pantomime of a massacre, I was taken with compunction for my light words, and eager to be rid of him. I remembered now having heard ill rumours concerning the man, of his periodical returns to savagery, of thefts, murders even, never laid to any other account, under whose shadow he moved brazen and stolid in his English clothes. I speak not now in the light of after knowledge, nor forgetful of what I am myself accused of, but touching

this man there were even then two parties in the settlement: by Grout, whose sole catechumen he was and the church elders generally, he was flattered and caressed out of measure, but my master and Gideon would have hanged him out of hand without benefit of clergy, and I think now 't was a pity they were not suffered.

It was long after he had gone down the street, fiddling softly all the while, that my mistress came forth. Even then there were all manner of laughing farewells and women's chatter to be finished at the door before she tripped down to the gate and let me put her up on the pillion.

"Did you think I never was coming, Diccon?" says she when she had waved her hand for the last time, settling her skirts as the patient mare began to pace homewards.

"Never is a long day, madam," said I, "but indeed I thought you used no great dispatch."

"'T is a wonder I came at all," she said. "Mr. Chapin would have me spend the night with them."

"There is not much of the night left for you to spend anywhere," I told her, "by the moon 't is near two o'clock."

"Well," says she, humming a little dance tune, "the time fled to-night Diccon. Such store of sweet flatteries I have heard, my ears must be burning hot."

"You are not hard to please in your flatterers," says I rudely, "I could hear their thick shoes tramping from the road."

"Ye have no call to despise them," she retorted hotly, "they are as good as yourself though homespun: freemen and householders. Belike they despise you no less, who are not even your own man."

"Why," says I, "think you 't is for their estate I despise them. No, no! were I begging my bread to-night in this inhospitable town 't would be all one. 'T is their clod polls and earthy hearts, mean wits and dirty tongues I loathe them for."

"Well," says she, "there are none others here, so one must make the best and worst of them. Am I to go about with a frozen mouth because there are none but hodden cases to good hearts. Well for you were you as adaptable."

"Such is not my genius," I said, sulkily.

"Ye need not to tell me," said she. "I know it but too well. Your genius is to step mincingly and frown arrogantly. Never a kind word have I heard you give to the farm hands all the time you have been in our house, only to fling them my father's food, which is a part of their wage and earned by their sweat and sinews, as tho' 't were scraps to Lazarus or bones to the dog; then are you quite outfaced when they greet not your mightiness with a waft of the hat, and a vail of their tousled heads to your coat armour."

"My faults are legion," said I wearily, "spare me their auditory."

"There is none like to tell you of them as gently as myself, Diccon," she answered, "neither did I begin the embroilment. I love not quarrels, neither to begin them nor to pursue them."

"I am witness to-night," says I, sneering, "how easy you forget them."

"What would you say?" she asks sharply, seeking to look over my shoulder.

"Did ye enjoy your turn with the bold captain?" says I, "in the Old World when a man hath carried

coals* so lately, he rears not his head in assemblies. But may be you like home-spun courage as well as home-spun flattery."

"Now I smoke your ill humour," said she, but not as one altogether displeased, "and why should I foment our quarrel further? I am not a man to be pushing my point at his breast every time we meet. I suppose you will tell me next you followed us?"

"Yes I did, madam," says I, furiously, "and I had a dag† in my boot, and well for him I was not in at the reconciliation."

"Gall-bitten man," says she, shaking me by the bracing strap, "I spoke not twenty words to him and those indifferent ones. Besides, the incivility he offered me was no great things, tho' ye chose to make it so; more as a vent to your spleen, I do believe, than for my honour's sake. He is no worse than the rest. All men are vile."

"So ye have told me once or twice before," I said, "and with all respect I think it not a very pretty word on your lips. If your ill luck hath let you meet none but the vile, 'twere a misfortune best kept silence upon."

"I see well," says she, "you are set upon quarreling to-night; so I had best be silent and give no more occasion. I am sorry I brought you with me, since incivility to a woman is part of your breeding."

"Indeed," I retorted, "I think the drudgery hath been mine, no less."

We rode on a while in silence, and by now had left the Summerfield clearing and were entering upon the dark woodland path. I thought the ride home I had

* To carry coal—to swallow an affront.

† A small pistol.

promised myself was not like to be a great diversion. Presently she spoke again:

"Have ye had supper, Diccon?"

"And where, in God's name," said I, now quite exasperated, "was I to get it, since your Summerfield houses are like the gates of Derry, faith, and Turk, Jew, or atheist may enter them, but not a papist."

She put her long white hand over my shoulder, holding some cake or pastry.

"Are you not lucky," says she, "to have a mistress so provident. I saved my squire a few crumbs, and, had his mouth not been so full of venom, it might by now have been busy with something sweeter."

"I want none of their broken meats," said I ungraciously.

She still pressed it upon me.

"'Tis too late," says I, "I am gone past my appetite."

"What," says she, low at my ear, "will ye have me throw into the road what I took the pains to beg for you?"

My anger melted, as it did too easily for her, and I not only took the cake from her hand but covered it with kisses.

"Oh," I said, "forgive me, love, forgive me. You know not what a tiger hath gnawed at my heart all night."

"Sweetheart," said she, "you were forgiven before the offence: and indeed 't was ill done to leave you hunger-bitten all those hours."

Said I with my mouth full, "What a bear must you think me, to growl because I am supperless."

"No, no," says she, "'t is a man's fault. And now while you eat my collation and are wrought to a

better mood I will tell you, sir, what you do not deserve to hear, which is, that I loitered only to have the ride home with you alone, for the Captain was very stiff to accompany me, and I fear I gave the poor man some advises about my lying all night at Chapin's which you would consider matter for confession."

We were in the depth of the wood's obscurity by the time I was done eating; as alone as though we were at the sea's bottom. She put back her hood and laid her head upon my shoulder.

"Is my head heavy for you, Diccon," she asked

"'Tis when 't is lightest," I answered "that it irks me sorest."

"It is only heavy now with sleep," says she.

I told her in an access of passion that I would it might sleep nowhere else all our lives.

She put up her mouth and kissed me on the cheek.

"'T would tire you in a month, dear," said she, "I am an old bitter-tongued woman, Diccon. There never was a man I was so sharp with as yourself. Why do you bear me so patiently?"

"Ye are the sweetest woman in all the earth, Madam Agnes," says I, "and were there to be naught for me evermore but sharp speeches, I had rather them at your tongue than all the world's soft flatteries."

"Can you not put me round in front of you," says she presently, "I am weary craning my neck to get at your lips."

I checked the mare while she stepped round on my boot toe, and she nestled in my arms, while we went on at a foot pace.

"Is not the wood still and silent," says she next, "and yet I never felt fear in the forest. When I was a little maid there was a wood quite next our garden

and I would take all my child's troubles and scalded hearts into it for comfort, and wept when 't was cut away."

"Do not speak to me of your childhood," I begged her.

She asked me why not.

"I know not," I said "but to-night it fills my heart with tears."

She threw her arms round my neck in an abandonment of affection and put her face against my bosom, the grey mare plodding on towards the house, with her freight of folly and frailty, constant and unhurried as God's purpose. I know not how it happened, whether I checked the mare or she stopped feeling the rein fall slack on her neck. Only that we were on the forest track, soft and deep with mould and last year's leaves and the beast away from us thrusting her nose in among them while I held my mistress to my heart.

"Say you love me! Say you love me!" I repeated, clinging to this assurance it seems, as the one thing not vile or ignoble in all this tempest of shame and violence.

I know not if she answered. I think she told me so o'er and again, but my ears were deaf with passion. I know she did not return one of the kisses I rained upon her eyes and lips, upon her bosom, through the lace, from which the red cloak dropped as I held her, like a great clot of blood from a mortal wound. She was cold and motionless, a woman of marble, her lips parted, her eyes closed, her arms fallen from my neck and laid along her sides: I must hold her or she would have fallen. There was a mist before my own eyes, no thought in my brain save only this: that

here was I falling, falling headlong, through flowers and roots of flowers into the mire beneath.

Suddenly she stood erect and put her hands to her temples, as one awaking from a dream.

"Get on the horse," she said, thickly.

"Not so," said I, furious that hers should be the hand to stay my descent, "not so, you have played with fire once too oft."

She struggled with me, grasping my wrists, but her next words sobered me.

"Diccon! for God's sake have reason and do not destroy us both. Can ye not hear one coming up behind us?"

The mist cleared little by little from my senses and I heard plainly the tramp of a ridden horse, it seemed some hundred yards behind us, in among the trees. I caught the mare, and lifted my mistress on to the pillion, then hearkened again for a little space, hearing now not only the horse's feet, but the jingle of bridle chains and the creak of a saddle.

"Who can be riding at this hour?" I asked.

"Belike," says she, "'t is someone for my father."

Twice or thrice during my service her father had been summoned at night, for he had a pretty skill in leechcraft.

"They would ride hard," said I, "not at an amble."

I bade her draw in among the trees and give me the pistols from their holsters.

"You are crazed" said she, beating her breast with impatience, "get on the horse. For the love of God let us at least be seen riding. Oh, if any of the neighbours had passed us just now!"

I got on the mare, and we rode along, slow and silent; yet still the belated traveller did not overtake

us. Nothing is so trying to the mettle as this, to wait for a pursuer whom one can hear and not see. I had done it before, but never with a woman behind me, and 't is not an addition I would recommend.

"How is it," said I presently, "that we hear this horse behind us yet not the hoofs of our own beast."

"I know not," said she in a whisper, cowering against my shoulder, "but oh, ride on!"

I did not speak again until we were well out of the forest, and Pickosick below us asleep in the moon-light, not a light at its windows.

"Man or devil," said I, "the rider should be out of the wood by now," and I checked the mare and made as if to get down. She held me in the saddle by my shoulders and put her cheek to mine.

"Be patient Diccon," she moaned, "and take me home; to-night I am sore frightened."

Indeed as she spoke the sound began again, close at our backs, although not a shadow, I swear, was on the road betwixt us and the wood.

We did not speak again; our parting at the gate was only a silent embrace; but when she was safe in, and the door closed behind her, I walked back into the road and drawing the pistols, waited patiently. There was a by-path a little below the house and a long wooden bridge over the stream, and had any turned off that way, I knew I must presently hear the drumming of feet upon the timber. But there was no more sound that night, only the sough of a wind rising with dawn.

Suddenly a great terror fell over my flesh like a douche of water. I did not kneel down—rather my legs gave way beneath me, and I fell to the dusty earth with my head upon my wrists. I could not pray,

but the wind and the river prayed for me. The years were no more, vanished like wraiths as they are; I was back in our college chapel at Compline. I saw the bowed youthful heads along the stalls as our white-haired rector, turning from the lectern, took hallowed water to bless his surpliced family, I smelled the incense, the old chant returned to mine ears:

“Thou need never be afeared for the terror of the night; for the plague that flitteth in the shadow, for the onset of the evil one at noon day.

“A thousand shall fall at thy side, yea ten thousand at thy right hand; yet anigh thee it may not come.

“For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

“Until with thine own eyes thou hast looked and beheld the reward of the wicked.”

CHAPTER XI

THIS was God's last mercy to me before those fiery ones; all the rest is a lapsus and enduring of heart.

It hath truly been said that no two souls go exactly the same road into sin, neither is any tale by which the long night of hell's eternity is beguiled a fellow to the other. The approach is broad enough for all to go easy and at their will, on the crest or in the gutters. Yet as on the widest road will be some one track worn deepest where most feet elected to go, so also there is a common usual way into sin, and since 't was that way my own unused feet preferred to follow it may be that in telling mine own tale I am telling that of others, and to them let my accomplished journey and fearful end stand as a finger post, while yet there is time. Sin is no precipice; the enemy of souls would never have it so, for flesh to shrink or head to spin at its profundity; rather that most diabolical engineer hath graded our way down into it with many a level stretch to dupe our eyes; nay, I think there lack not even ascendant levels, tho' very short ones, so that we sometimes seem to be climbing upward; yet doubt not the road keepeth its declivity.

'T is little at first to step from flower to flower gathering it, and presently emptying our hand because of a fairer lower still. Soon the valley encloseth us, free of the winds and storms of heaven, bees hum drowsily, fruits cluster, tempting us. So down and

ever down till 't is too late for return, the upward path forgot or too difficult, night closing in upon us and wild beasts roaring for their destined prey. 'T is this the ancient poet would have us know when he saith *Facilis descensus Averni*; not that the bowels of the earth are easy or pleasant to a man, for I think there are few souls happy in their early transgressions nor wrought up to sin for ever; rather:

“Not steep nor sharp the early steps to sin;
By smoothest gradients doth that path begin.”

First, then, I omitted my prayers and forewent all practices of devotion. It may have been a piece with the logick of my trained mind, or, as sometimes I have liked to think, a sort of shamefaced generosity towards God even in my sin; but I would not, after that night in the forest, affront Him any longer with my insincere petitions. How could I pray, indeed “deliver us from evil,” when 't was all evil that I sought; “lead us not into temptation,” when any accident that delayed or interrupted our caresses filled my heart with God knows what blasphemous fury. I would not ask even for protection against death, though, He knows, I dreaded it each hour of the day. Once at haying when a fearful streak of lightning ran out of a cloud, near me, and I had begun, out of habit, to cross my breast, as is the custom among Catholics, I stopped midway through the motion, for, thinks I, what can be God's will but that the lightning smites me, fire consumes me, the tree crushes me, and stays my daily injuries and offences against His majesty.

There was also a deep pool of water below the ruined hut, into which I plunged, many's the time,

to cool my body during this fervid summer. One Sabbath afternoon when all were at meeting, and I was swimming in it merrily, there sounds a voice over my head like a crack of thunder.

“What!” it saith, “dare ye thus to tempt the Lord God disporting yourself in this treacherous river suspended twixt earth and sky. Think,” it says, “how sudden and how easy might a current seize you, weeds entangle you, the waters close over your mouth and lungs, washing out your name from among the living, and speeding your soul to hell.”

At which terrifying thought or may be the coldness of the water, for I had been in over long, a sudden cramp took hold upon me, and enlaced my limbs, so that, had I not contrived to seize a branch that hung over the pool, and struggle along it to shore, I believe I had indeed been drowned; as 't was I lay upon the bank panting, many minutes before I could rise and put on my clothes, neither dared I ever again venture in above my breasts. Yet true no less it is, in all my struggles in the water, and they were very terrible, for I went under twice, I say in all that agony, I never once called upon God to save me, nor uttered one cry of penitence, not so much as we are told may justify a sinner twixt saddle and ground;* so sweet was my love to me, I was willing to confront hell rather than surrender it.

Another thing was this; I would take care my speeches and carriage should always exceed and go beyond my present desires; running footmen, to scare away scruples out of my path. This is no uncommon thing. Many a sinner boasts of crimes he

* Twixt the saddle and the ground
 Mercy sought and mercy found

hath never committed only to brace himself for those he would commit. For an instance, one day my mistress sat talking with me, lingering after the midday meal, which we oft times took now with no company but our two selves, the men in these hot days taking their dinner afield, to save the weary journey to the house, or, even did they dine with us, we would contrive by making a great bustle of the service to delay our own until after they had gone; I say we were at talk together, when says my mistress, after a long silence, I, you may be sure, meantime not idle with her hand:

"Diccon," says she, "have ye no friends at all in the world?"

"Why," says I, fondling her, "you are my friend, are ye not?"

"No, no, Diccon," she says when our lips were asunder, "I am but a poor, weak, unable friend; I mean friends in the world, at home, not alone willing, but able, to help you to your freedom."

I dropped her hand and stared out of window, for her words were a very harsh reveille to my dreams.

"Why do you not speak," she said, "are you busy reckoning them?"

"They are soon counted," says I bitterly, turning to her again. "'T is a humiliating word to tell you, but I do believe I have not one save you, in the wide world."

"Think," says she again, looking hard at me, "no kin, no ancient comrades?"

"No more," says I, "than if fire had fallen from heaven and consumed them."

"Who sent you out here," she asked keenly, "how comes it you went not to Guinea with the rest?"

"First, I fell sick," said I, "then there was a lady came visiting prisoners at the Marshalsea who interested herself in my behalf."

"Ha! a woman," says she, "you told me nothing of this before."

"What should I tell?" says I, "she was a good woman, a widow. God will requite her, I hope."

"Yes, yes," she said, impatiently, tapping with her foot "I am a widow too, but I would know something of this one. Was she old? uncomely?"

"Neither very old nor very uncomely," I answered smiling, for I could not help it, at her curiosity.

"You are too evasive, sir," says she, flushing, "'t is not a pretty fashion."

"How much would you know," said I, "I cannot tell you her name; we prisoners called her Madam Whitecap, because she wore a coif."

"But her face, Diccon?"

"'T was sad," says I, "a little faded and swollen with age."

"Her figure?"

"Not very unlike your own," says I, glancing over her, "but something larger."

"All this soundeth very well to me," said she, a little angry, "though I pluck it from you, as with pincers. A sad pale face, a linen coif, very like a nun, I dare imagine."

"There," said I to her, "you have said all. She was more like a nun than any woman I have seen in the world."

"Ha, ha," says she, curling her lip, "the proverb is true then, 'no monk without his nun.'"

"How dare you," said I, angrily, "speak thus of the brides of heaven."

"Let be the brides of heaven," said she, putting up her hand, "this fine indignation will not cross my scent. You said 'we prisoners': were others by you when she gave you your broth, and smoothed your bed?"

"At first there would be," said I. 'T was so pretty to watch the blood come and go in her face that I was in no hurry to be done.

"But not afterwards, you would say?"

"No, madam; afterwards I had a chamber to myself, quite."

"Where white cap would visit you?"

"She abated not her kindness," said I demurely.

"No," cries she, now quite angered. "I'll warrant she abated it not. I smoke the holy widow well enough, with her Bible and her soups, going through the prisons to seek likely cavaliers to comfort them. You are either a greater fool than I had thought it possible a man could be, or a craftier woodman* than you have let us think."

A month ago I would have reproved her smartly for her evil images, and hotly denied her imputations. But by now, as I have told you, such a change had been wrought in me, that her jealousy was as honey in my mouth, and I twisted up my moustaches, which I had begun to let grow after the manner of our young *freiherr*s in *Hoblingers'*, and told her, with that monstrous parade of discretion, which is in a man's mouth the surest calumny or betrayal of a woman, that I had told her too much already for my honour, she must not exact more.

"Go to her," she cries, snatching away her hand, "go back to her for your fondling!" and would speak no more to me until night, when, with a great gush of

* Woodman—an old cant word of ill significance.

tears from her, and disloyal equivocations on my part these *amantium iræ* became our love's *redintegratio*. But what a vile action 't was for me to besmirch the good fame of this pious woman who had been God's Providence unto me, for though I told not, indeed knew not, her name, yet the wrong done her was the same: I say is it not a terrible revelation of the depths to which I was sunken, to think I should both slander myself and implicate another, affront truth and scandalise an heretic — and all for what? To swell myself into the conceit of a weak, erring woman, and by the attrition of jealousy to multiply kisses and caresses where God knows I had enough already. Moreover, that the thing might not lose its proximate punishment, she began from this time to be a little less delicate with me, and concerned herself no more with my misgivings.

One attempt I did make to turn our disordered affections into a lawful channel; but, as I besought not God's help in it, so His blessing rested not upon it, and I got no good thereby, rather confusion to myself.

'T was a night on which we were riding home together; for, the precedent once established, I was now bidden fetch her home from any of the neighbours, yet that interrupted stratagem of the first night we never renewed, seeking rather to await new occasions than again to make trial of what such a mystery had interrupted, nor did we ever again refer to that horror; I say, she was up behind me and we had been silent a little while.

"Madam," says I, "will you marry me?"

She let go the belt and put her arms around my body; I thought at first in a transport of affection, until I perceived her own shook with laughter.

"I am pleased to make you merry, madam," says I sourly, "but would I had chosen another way."

"Diccon, Diccon," says she, "you have slipped your opportunity for this year; we must wait until next Shrovetide, and make carnival of it. I will promise you a merry gathering at our wedding; 't is not every day a servant marries his mistress, even in this topsy-turvy land."

"Where you are too proud to wed," says I, "you should be too proud to kiss."

"Simple man," says she, giving me a little blow on the cheek, "whither would you take me? Into Calamy's house? I misdoubt we should be a sad distraction to his Bible reading. Or would ye come into my father's? I fear me your theological wrangles would make me a sad honeymoon."

My cheek burned and my whole body tingled with shame, but I had spoken now and would braze it out.

"New England is not the world," said I, "once in Europe I could find employment."

"And where would you bestow me in Europe, Diccon? Ye are good for naught but to fight or preach, fond man. I have never even taught you the mystery of sweeping a floor."

"I might yet win a way with my sword," said I loftily, but as I said it, I knew I should never be a soldier again.

"And I meantime?" she asks, "behind the army, with your baggage, light and heavy; a camp kettle for a seat and trulls for my company."

"Well, well," says I hastily, "let be! let us have done with it." Indeed I could have bitten my tongue through for bringing me into such a humiliation.

"Besides, dear," says my mistress more softly now,

putting her cheek to mine, which I marvel did not scorch her, "there is that matter of your religion ever in the road."

"Would you have me change that?" I asked.

She was thoughtful for a few moments.

"You could not change it, Diccon," she told me sadly. "'T is by now the marrow of your bones."

"Then why rebuke me with it?" said I tartly.

"I do not rebuke you, sweetheart," she said gently, "only to shew you you could not marry an heretic, did fortune smile never so fair."

"Therein is no difficulty," I said, proud to refute her. "The Scripture saith: The wife is sanctified by the husband."

"Yes," says she, pinching my ear, "such sanctification as I was like to get from you the other night."

Alas! how silent are our good intentions, and our inconsistencies how clamorous! Before this little mischievous word on a woman's lips all my theology was abashed; nor did I for long speak to her of such things again.

"You could not be both my husband and my confessor, Diccon," she asks me presently, "could ye now?"

"True," says I, "but I would find you some discreet ancient man."

"I'll warrant," says she, "as ugly as a toad."

"A toad spitteth a jewel, dear."

"He would spit none at me," she declared, "rather I know well he would begrudge you to me, and take it very hard I had cheated some prim penitent of his own out of so docile and apostolic a husband. Let me speak, Diccon," for I sought to stay these follies by worse. "I say he would bear me no good will,

and to spite me I know, would stint your kisses; none on Friday, a very scant allowance through Lent and Advent, and in Ember week a terrible hair shirt that should tear me if I came near you."

"Pretty fool," says I, for the house now came into sight, "I would our rides might last for ever."

"Are ye made truly happy, Diccon, with my poor presence?" she asked.

I told her my only discontent was lest I lose her, and that for ever at my heart.

"Well," says she briskly, "you have not lost me yet; be happy in what you have, and do not make bogies to fill the future. May I teach you a little philosophy, wise man of the East?"

"What is it?" says I, as I helped her from the horse.

"This, my heart," said she, taking off my hat and laying her lips to my hair, "that if we miss the present we miss all of life, since the past is lost to us already, and the future we may not promise ourselves."

"That is a sad pagan philosophy, Agnes,"

"Oh," said she, shutting the gate betwixt us, "have ye but just discovered I am a pagan?"

And indeed I misdoubt at times there was malpractice at her baptism.

CHAPTER XII

BUT now came on the torrid dog days and season of the scorpion, when the cattle stood to their knees in shaded shallows of the brook, and discordant cicalas gave unto the heat a voice, screeching beneath the scorched grass. In the salt meadows along the river bank the hay drooped for the scythe and there was now no idle time for any. My mistress, even, raked and pitched, her gown pinned up and a kerchief upon her hair, browning her white arms, or carried the pitcher to the sweating mowers, with little curtsies and graces that filled my soul with rapture. There was truce called to our dalliance and for my part I found no fault with it. All men go their own gait upon the primrose path, the rough man furiously, the sluggish slothfully, the delicate man deliberately. To refine our lusts is not to crucify them, to suffer the eye to feed daintily is not to deny its arrogance. I would not go bustling into sin, nor deny myself one rapture of such a confident desire. Meantime be sure there was many a clinging embrace or hasty kiss to renew our bargain; on hay carts and behind corn shocks, in dark corners of the stifling house.

She would let her hand lie on mine under the windrow while we sate at dinner in the field or put it behind her back for me to pay it homage with my lips, as we stooped next one another at our work. She would single me out from among the men by many a little pointed speech, that could not pierce their thick wits,

and so glanced from her father's innocence, he would sometimes even take my part and justify me to her, than which nothing was sweeter to my ears. The men answered her seldom, though the younger ones gazed often upon her, and I doubt not she was the desire of their eyes no less than mine, and it may be at this time her image haunted many a dull brain and troubled many an humble pallet.

If there was a fly in the ointment of my content during this harvest, it was bred from the matter of my mistress's speech to me about my friends. 'T is indeed a bitter, bitter thing to be friendless: even He that saved us by His labours and death, tho' He chose to go harbourless, elected not to go friendless, but had them both men and women all His life, or at least during those three years of ministry which are revealed to us; nay, forebore not to favour some beyond others with human predilections, loving John above his apostles, and the family of Lazarus above his entertainers, and I think we may pray unrebuked, both for God to find us friends, and when found to preserve their hearts to us.

But for myself, either through family dissensions, the waste of war, shifting of garrisons and the like, true it is, I had come out to this Colony naked of friends as of aught else. During my last service, so hurried had been our enrolment and so rapid our march, I had not found time even to make the acquaintance of my subalterns as is a superior officer's duty. That Colonel O'Neill, of whom ye have heard talk and may again, upon whose interest I had obtained my commission and was an old friend of our family, had come a prisoner to London soon after myself, and as I heard upon enquiry, been committed to the

Tower, whence he was enlarged a little later, no man, as he has told me since, so amazed thereat as himself, whose mind was wrought up for an hempen cravat, having been very active not alone in the English war but also the rebellion in Ireland. He was now gone over to Paris, but of this I tell you I was ignorant, as also of the fall from favour of my old patron, Sir Harry Vane. 'Twas upon this last indeed, in default of others, I now based my hopes, for none is so hapless that he is also hopeless, and upon a calculation of his interest, I built myself in twelve hours, a fine cloud castle, not indeed in Spain, but in the Colony of Maryland, south of Massachusetts and the Dutch; for I was not unadvised of the toleration extended there to Catholics so they would live conformably to government.

I spoke upon this very matter to my mistress one evening, and begged for ink and paper to make out a petition, but she threw a great douche of cold water over this tender flame of hope.

"Why," said she, staring upon me, "ye are sent out here for ten years, and six months of it are barely gone."

I told her that nothing dare nothing do.

"Dare away, goodman," says she, "here are all the pens and paper in the house at your service. But suppose your nine years be remitted you, how do you propose to start planting in Maryland? Are ye going to ask them also for a farm ready planted?"

"Have I not my arms," says I hotly, "as other men?"

She laughed at me very open and hearty.

"Indeed you have," said she, "none should know it better than myself of late: but I misdoubt they are better fitted for clinging than for clearing. There are

axes a plenty round the house, and I think you were better employed as soon as the sap is gone from the trees into the ground again, in clearing away some of our waste with three meals a day and a roof assured you, than dancing rigs in Maryland with a free neck and an empty belly."

"Oh!" said I bitterly, "I get scant encouragement from you at any time."

"Because, dear," she said more softly, "I think you have sharper need of common worldly shrewdness than of encouragement, for say that you had as many slaves as you have hairs, must they not eat while they work? Upon that poor estate of my husband's there was two thousand pounds spent in one year, and little enough to shew for it. If many hands make light work, also many mouths eat all away. Then what knowledge have you of husbandry or strength to perform it? My father saith he could never learn you to run a furrow straight nor deep if he kept you at it a twelvemonth. Myself can pitch hay against you, who am but a weak woman."

My airy castle toppled over before her rough wisdom, like Jericho before the trumpets, and my discomfiture was like to bring tears to my eyes.

"But let me not damp you," says she presently (who had deluged me i' faith), "I will go get you paper and ink and a quill, poor lad, and you may sit down here under the lamp, and make out your petition."

I said I thought I could do better in our own house, and presently went there with a very heavy heart, and all the inspiration gone out of my head, wherein I had had composed a very fine document.

Even when seated in the hut, with that great square of paper to fill, the inkhorn beside me, and

Calamy groaning and twisting on his bed, not a word could I write. I heard already the laughter in the council room as my poor petition was read, saw Cromwell scrawl his great endorsement upon it and hand it round for others to share the wag, for he had a wit of the roughest, before he consigned it to the limbo of ungranted and unnoticed requests. So after dipping my point unnumbered times in the ink and nibbling the feather quite away, I put the paper to one side unsullied, and went to bed with a very sore heart.

The next morning my mistress, be sure, failed not to question me about it. A storm of rain had interrupted the harvesting, which was near done, the men were out raking over the windrows for the sun to dry them and we excused from the field.

I told her I had not yet finished it, that when 't was done I would shew it her.

"I see," says she, "'t is to be a lengthy recital of woes. To whom is it addressed, Diccon, to the Lord General or the Pope?"

I must then confess I could not tell her even this.

"So neither have you begun it," said she, her eyes alight with malice. "No matter, Richard, I have discharged the thing myself, so ye may spare your trouble."

"What," says I, smoking some pleasantry, "are ye a clerk as well as a husbandman?"

"To be sure," she replied, wiping her mealy hands upon her apron and drawing forth a paper from her bosom, "did you think you were at the end of my accomplishments so soon? Am I to read it for you, sir?" she asks, putting herself into a posture.

I bade her do as she pleased.

"First," said she, "sit you down on that chair,

fold your arms and strive to scowl like Cromwell.”
She cleared her throat.

“Beginneth,” said she:

“To the right honourable Sir Harry Vane and the lords of Council, the humble petition of their obliged servant Richard Fitzsimon, armiger, late a trooper of Prince Robert’s horse guard, later still Major in Colonel Phelim O’Neill’s barefoot brigade of Wild Irish, and latest of all groom of the pantry to Colonel Fleming of Long Meadow in Massachusetts;

“Sheweth:

“That whereas your petitioner was taken prisoner in a cock-loft nigh Worcester not a year gone, while on his way to a Jesuit Seminary, and shipped out by your worships for his correcting, ten years to these Colonies;

“And whereas:

“He findeth the medicine so sharp that in six months he conceiveth this end accomplished, and findeth himself a reformed exemplary character, to which witness his mistress’s testimony attached;

“And, moreover:

“Having cast his eyes upon the said mistress, he findeth her not ill favoured nor ill dowered, and is anxious to keep her by him always, as a surety against further Seminary desires;

“He discovereth the meanness of his depressed condition an obstacle to this attainment,

“Now therefore your petitioner prayeth:

“That ye would be pleased to send him out together with his pardon, such a grant of cleared and settled land in Maryland or elsewhere as may befit his gentle condition, and moreover, being himself ignorant of the mystery of husbandry, such a number of discreet docile laborious persons as may ensure him its yearly revenues and increase.

“There!” said she folding the paper again, “tell me could ye do better for all your learning?”

"Why do you love to humble me, Agnes?" I asked her.

She knit her brows a moment, then in a transport of shame or repentance crumpled up the paper and cast it into the fire, throwing herself into my arms.

"Beat me! beat me!" she said between her teeth; "beat me as you beat the stallion that afternoon."

"No, no," says I, "poor woman, I will never beat you."

"You know 't would be no new experience for me," said she, blushing crimson, as she ever did, at any reference to her married life.

"I would not hurt any living creature," said I, smoothing her hair, "you last of all, whom I love and would cherish."

She pushed me away and turned to her work again.

"I would rather see you often as I saw you that day," says she.

I told her I had shame of it afterwards.

"I know that well," she said, curling her lip, "do you think I did not see you steal out with a handful of roots for the unmannerly beast you had flogged."

I was silent, watching the ashes of the petition fly in the chimney.

"How is it you are so gentle, Richard?" she asked me presently. "I did not think 't was in the nature of a man."

"I will tell you," said I, "tho' you think me a weak fool for my pains. When I took that deadly trade of a soldier, which is to cut off men from the living and to make widows and orphans, I made a vow to God, that outside of my fearful office I never would add one feather's weight to the load of human misery, and promised Him that beyond the public enemy,

never man nor woman should bemoan that I had crossed their path. Nay, I have told you so much, I will tell you all. I begged Him to put upon mine own shoulders all I might bear of that burden, and if there was no other way, in my tears to wash the blood from off my hand."

My mistress gazed upon me a while then says she:
'And have ye killed many men?'

This is a question no soldier cares to be asked him, nor to answer, I told her God had them counted.

"I believe, Diccon," says she, very quietly, "I would like you to kill me too."

I laughed.

"That is a very sick fancy, Agnes."

"No, no," she told me, shaking her head very earnestly, "I make no light speeches, I am one to consider ere I open my lips. I do not mean I would die this moment: only that were there no other way I might die in your arms, I could bear for you to take that knife now from the table and put it in my heart. Do ye fear death, Diccon?"

Oh! if I had preserved my innocence of heart and rightness of intention, what an opportunity was given me, while this woman's heart was softened, to speak to her of that faith, which maketh the coward a lion, babes stouter than old warriors in face of the king of terrors; of that love which withering up the natural mortal fear of death, as the sun Jonah's gourd, leaveth only the desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, so that the pains which attend the loosening of the bonds of our mortality are scarce felt, as I well knew, who had seen my father die, going into his tomb as a bridegroom into the bridal chamber.

Alas! such words and images could no longer come

forth from a heart where lurked that vile design. No, no, that jealous beast would have all and leave me no comfort outside of him for myself, let others alone. What a farce indeed to tell her of a love that conquers death, yet conquered not my concupiscence.

I forget now how I answered her. She shook her head as though to shake out these ungrateful thoughts, and was presently merry again.

About this time, too, Captain Gideon would be much around the fields and house, his quarrel quite composed. He would ride over many's the time while we were at haying, and getting off his beast, take up fork or sickle and do his share in the work. But oftener he would draw my master aside, when they would converse, rather earnestly I thought for such near neighbours, or he would draw him off altogether, and they two go riding into town, leaving my mistress to overlook the working men, and a very shrewd steward she was. 'T was an endless entertainment to me to watch her knowledge of field work, and hear how she plied the men with her tongue when they were laggard, as with a lash, until far from wondering longer at her old sharp speeches to my own backwardness, I marvelled to think how lightly I had come off.

It was so on the last day of harvest. There is here none of the pretty ceremonial of the English harvest home, neither libations to Ceres; Puritanism hath put all such things out of countenance. But my mistress was inspirited with the end of the work and the bounteous harvest and would have some little difference made for the last load, so bade the boys pick flowers and make of them garlands for the horses' heads with plumes of oat straw, and when all was ready made for herself a wreath of yellow poppies and

had me get upon the cart and help her to mount. She was very flushed and merry, thrusting her hand out to me to kiss as I lay hidden among the corn stooks. Her father and the Captain rode up from the town as we came near the stack yard, and she went into the house with them her arm around the old man's neck.

"Am I not a good steward to you?" she said.

We supped late that night on account of the stacking, and I thought my mistress looked upon me a little sad and wistful, so that when the others were withdrawn, and we two alone preparing some messes to carry in to my house fellow, who was now quite bed-ridden, I had a mind to question her upon the cause of her chagrin, but while I hesitated, as ever, herself forstalled me, saying, very low and quick, for the other door stood open:

"I must find an occasion to speak with you to-night, Diccon. How shall we best contrive it?"

I suggested that she might excuse herself upon carrying the broth to Shubaal, and we speak together before she returned to the house. I had indeed a deal to tell her, for we had had scant occasion for converse during the busy harvest tide, and I had prepared many a pretty speech to please and flatter her with, of her beauty as she stood among the harvesters, kissed by the sun like Ruth of old, how I felt her to be the desire of all eyes by day, yet I alone privileged to share her dreams at night and the like lovers' glozes. Also having pen and ink now by me, I had written her a sonnet, for I had a knack of rhyming when I was a young man, and have wasted many an hour therein, which God pardon me. This one was to tell her, how even though I were fated never to call her mine own, yet did I feel myself so uplifted

by her favour that no action of the day how mean soever, but she resigned me to it, so long as like secret armour I might wear her love next me against the world's reproof. I say I was anxious to shew her this poor thing, not alone that she might think less meanly of my wit than I feared she did, but because I felt kisses and the like were a poor common usual way of to shew my love, though this is to be said, such demonstrations do content all but a very few women; I must think because they can best return them in kind.

When we got to the cabin 't was pretty to watch her tend the grumbling old man, smoothing his pillows and making over his bed. She lifted him as easy as if he had been a little child, and fed the old pirate his broth, which he took from her hand very slow and ungracious, coughing often and refusing the spoon.

"Now, Mrs. Agnes," said I, when we were together at our old trysting place in the orchard, "what are your great news?"

But it seems they were hard to tell, or hard to begin, for she stayed silent so long, not responding to any caress of mine, that the stillness began to weigh upon my heart.

"Why do you not speak?" I asked at last.

"Because, Diccon," said she, "I have somewhat to tell that should have been told sooner and like all belated births, 't is uneasy coming forth."

My thought returned to those old hateful suspicions, but I answered her tenderly.

"Madam, if there be any old stories that will give you more pain to reveal than to keep secret, tell them me not, I pray you. You are by now at that place in

my heart whence naught can ever depose you, whether you tell me of it, or others."

She frowned:

"'T is naught of the past, Diccon," said she, "this concerns rather the future."

Then after a while:

"I have to tell you that we must part."

"Why," says I, not understanding, "you have not been ten minutes from the house."

"How hard you make it," says she fretfully, "I mean to-night our ways part."

"For how long?" I asked, my heart suddenly turning a stone within me.

"For ever, Diccon," says she composedly, yet her voice was a trump that laid the world in ruins around me. I should have fallen, but caught the rail of the paling.

"Why," says I, shaking my head like a boxer after a blow, "you are being merry with me. Think you such plays worth the while between us two when so much is to tell?"

"Look in my face, Diccon," she said simply, turning it to me out of the shadow.

I looked upon it, very white and ghostly. The moon was not risen but enough light there to see there was indeed no malice in it, instead 't was drawn with pain as I had only seen it once before.

"Now," says she, "think you I am coquetting?"

"But," said I, as soon as I could speak for the dryness of my mouth, "ye tell me we must part. Is this all your tale and I to ask no more?"

"You may ask what you will, Diccon," she says, "and I will strive to answer: or if you like better, instead I will tell you all, which shall it be?"

I bade her rather speak herself. It was a close, oppressive night; the Negro lasses were late at their work in the house: their careless bustle and clatter reached us in such disjointed outbursts as are only heard from without upon summer evenings when doors and windows lie open for the heat. The inner chamber looked not our way, but its lighted window cast a flare across the porch and in among the orchard trees, and I thought from time to time this penumbra was troubled by strange shadows, as though a man within crossed and recrossed the room with urgent converse and gesture. It needed not my long fellowship with misfortune to feel that this night was in labour with some disastrous decision.

"I have told you," said my mistress, "have I not? that my father is in many things a man apart and hard to understand."

I could not remember that she had done so, but assented, not to trouble her unduly.

"Of all his genius," said she, "the strangest surely is this: that he must ever be moving forward and on the frontier of the wilderness. I never knew him different, the fashion came upon him after my mother's death. 'T is a strange fancy, is it not, Diccon? No sooner the land cleared and neighbours around us, than he is for moving off into the forest. He maketh no secret of his affection but has himself declared he cannot be happy without the ring of axes in his ears."

I told her that it seemed to me a selfish humour.

"You are not to question my father's actions," said she, but without heat; "if I do not, who am so concerned, who are you to censure them? Enough to say such is the man's temper. I had thought that here at least we had struck our roots, for this is the

largest and fattest plats of land we have had, and the buildings most extended. And haply indeed my father might have stayed his feet here, for he is now grown an old man, but for another voice that he hath had, whispering at his ear of late."

"You would say the Captain," says I, thinking here was another count in my heart's indictment of the man.

"Ye need not be very wise, to guess that, Diccon," says she with a little faint shadow of a smile, "it seems it doth not consist with this man's designs that we should stay here, so we are to pull up our roots and away to west of the Connecticuts. Tomorrow himself starts to spy out this new Canaan and my father unto Boston to put matters in trim for selling our home and parcelling its fields out among small holders, and I with him."

"But," said I in amaze, "will you have me believe that this cursed boor's nod or beck is the rule unto the ordering of your father's life and yours? This is hard indeed to believe."

"Because," says she, "you know not the craft of the man. 'T is my poor father's weakness as no less his merit, to be a pioneer in all things: to toil and let others enter upon his labours, to sow that others may harvest. If he may be a providence to the improvident, an eye to the blind, 't is enough. Neither indeed can I call the Captain dishonest in all this, only that knowing this joint in my father's harness he hath not forborne to thrust therein. 'T is true I am sacrificed, but for what else are women created? And mind you this Richard," says she, "not for all the comfort and happiness of the world, would I cross my father's will or deny him that upon which his heart is set."

"And I meantime," I could not help but ask, "am I to be sold with your other chattels, or am I thought worthy of some special provision?"

She laid her hand on my arm.

"You must stay here," says she, "until we return. Chapin will have an eye to you. Fear for nothing, he is our true friend. This may even help you to your liberty, and at the most ye will have a kind master."

"You say, until we return," said I, clutching at this straw, "so this is not farewell."

She averted her face, and I fancied wrung her hands.

"Diccon," said she, "do not make it harder for me. Betwixt us two this is farewell. Of my return you must not think."

"Ah ha!" said I, "now I see clear you have left the worst to the last: the chief part is this, that you are to marry Gideon."

"There is no article in our treaty thereto," she said, simply, "but I think it very likely."

"And how long," said I, my passion rising as the blood returned to my heart, "how long hath all this been in motion?"

"You heard it mooted," said she, "'t was kept no secret from you."

"That was months ago," I answered, "and I thought it abandoned. If not, every kiss of yours since hath been a falsehood."

"No, no," she said, "there you are unjust; ye know well how many times I would have weaned you from me, both at the time you asked me to wed you, and after."

"What then," says I, "was the meaning of your speech and advice to enjoy the present?"

"Therein," said she, "I own I was wrong. 'T is a fault of my nature to make much of the flying moment and to let the day suffice for itself."

"'T is a murderous philosophy to others," I sobbed, burying my face in my hands.

"You will recover," she said earnestly, "you are no green boy, Diccon, to think such wounds mortal ones."

"And say that is so," said I, through my tears, "since you would belittle my love to the measure of your own, and deny me the poor dignity of my sorrow. Say that is so, am I better because being smitten with this terrible sickness at your hands I lack not the wit to foresee all its course, the nausea of its incubation, the crisis of its fever, and the dreariness of its convalescence. Or rather am I not to be pitied for my knowledge, and only the sadder being the wiser?"

"You have religion," said she. "God will bless you, and make you amends in other ways."

"You are two months late talking to me of God," says I. "I put him forth from my heart to take you in, and now am repaid as I deserve."

"We committed no sin together, Diccon," she urged, "that should be a comfort to you now."

"A comfort!" cried I, "a comfort, why, 't is the bitterest, burningest drop in all the chalice you give me to drink to-night. I was man enough to have gone down to hell for your love, but, oh! to have cast God's wages away, and be cheated of the devil's——"

"Diccon! Diccon!" said she, "do not speak so loud. You will be heard from the house."

She pulled my head down upon her bosom and held it there like a little hurt child's.

"God help us both," she said presently, "how could I dream ye cared so?"

"'T is your pride that is wounded sorest, heart," she said presently when I grew a little calmer, "that will heal soon."

"No, no," said I, "my pride you slew long since, there is none of it in my heart to-night. Listen! you have been very witty with the wild Irish, but for all their bare feet, and though I left my father's house so young, do ye imagine I had not already handselled my heritage, and knew not what it was to ride a mettled horse, a hawk on my wrist and my servant at my knee, and, looking round as far as eye could reach, see no field but belonged at least to my kin and race. Deem me a liar if you will, I tell you were all this offered me back again to-night, pleasures and riches and honour ten times multiplied, and my other choice to remain in this vile land, rated and harassed, my hodden clothes greasy from the spits and my poor shoes foul from the stables, not ten years, nor twenty years, but all my life, so I might take my wages in your arms, 't is this I would choose, not the others, and deem myself blessed in the choice. This is love," says I, "not the thing miscalled so by women, an instinct that seeks repletion, ye care not greatly where so it be with credit and soft living, thistledown that the wind sows in any man's field that can ensnare it.

"Diccon," says she, rocking my head in her arms, "women are not arbiters of their fate; we are not weavers, dear, but weft."

"And then," said I, not heeding her, "with what lying equivocations did ye fasten the yoke on my heart that you took from my shoulders. 'All that is here is mine,' said you, 'will ye blush to wear my livery,' so that I grew to love my servitude and

hug my fetters, nay, though now the flesh creeps upon my bones with shame to tell it, was sorry because your father loosed the collar so soon from my neck. God knows what secret joy I have had to watch your corn grow, thinking, hers is the increase, or to use my poor skill and strength to harvest it, thinking, I save it for her. Why, I have kissed the very earth, thinking 't was yours, and standing at night to watch the smoke curl from your chimney have thanked God 't was I fed your hearth. Take away your lips," I cried for I thought she would have stopped my breath with her kissing; "take away your lips, and, when I have told you one thing more, your arms as well, and let us make an end of it. You are very wise, very witty and I the vanquished, but believe me this: I had rather stay all the rest of my days what I have been till now, the dupe of knaves and the sport of women, than wound one poor simple heart as ye butcher mine to-night."

All my passion was spent now, she weeping as well, and we pressed our wet cheeks one to the other in silence.

"Harken, Diccon," quoth she presently, pointing to the house, "while we two fools are mingling our tears my fate is being debated in yonder house. To-night I will do for you what never I did before in all my life, and affront my father's will. Do ye know the little attic window above my chamber?"

I forget what I answered. I had no hope.

"To-night," says she, "watch it awhile. If ye see a candle set therein, then I have prevailed: if 't is dark, not all my efforts could save us, and we are beaten by the stars in their courses."

CHAPTER XIII

I SAW not any candle that night though I watched for it until my eyes, weighted with their double load of sleep and sorrow, would not be propped open longer. When I woke in the morning, there was at first no remembrance of the evening before, only the taste of sorrow in my mouth and smarting eyes, until a cow lowing outside our window, dissolved the enchantment of oblivion, and like the shirt of Nessus, misery enlaced my body once again with its burning cerements.

'T was a still, cloudless morning with the promise of a hot day to follow, but Lord, how grey and haggard it looked to me, like the face of one that hath watched unrefreshed throughout a night. Oh! thou first day of my chastisement, cried I, if thee I cannot bear, how shall I endure the succession of thy bitter progeny? Oh! first bead of my chaplet, if thou art so fiery hot betwixt my fingers, how shall they hold it until all sorrowful mysteries be accomplished? Oh! if I faint thus in the morning, how shall I endure at noonday?

Then I was but in my apprenticeship to pain: then I knew not how upon the first day of a martyrdom we bear the whole load of its duration, and that each day afterwards lightens it a little upon our bowed shoulders. But beyond all I yearned to be gone from this theatre of my orphaned hopes and bankrupt desires, I panted for the wings of a dove that they might bear me past mountains and over oceans, away, away from where each

stone and leaf and ripple henceforth must be pain's accomplice. I do not think I desired to see my mistress again. To me she was already gone, the land empty of her presence, as much a ghost to me as any of my dead.

I have told you 't was a part of my duty to secure the gate that lay near the ford every evening, so no less was I charged to open it in the morning, for there was a right of way through this estate, very jealously contended for, and throughout the day until sundown our cows were pastured in a fat meadow near to the house. This morning the office was the more grateful to me because it led me by that ruined house where I had saved my mistress upon the stallion, and I had a fancy 't would be in some sort a solace to my grief if I might gaze a little while upon the mouldering roof beneath which the poor settler had dwelled, and the dark pool wherein he had engulfed himself, crazed with loneliness and Calvinistic terrors, for 't is a manner of the unhappy to feel within themselves a kinship and affinity to all that is saddest and most horrible in life, and if they may not suck a medicine from others' pain at least therein is their preferred opiate, ever at hand.

I found that ardent cow which no fences could contain gotten into the brush again, and must give her chase, armed with a great branch, through its detours and uneasy paths, until my blood grew warm with the exercise, and, so meanly dependent upon the body is its ghostly habitant, by the time she was driven into the open, I was already a little less in love with death, and rather inclined to change and action for my relief. Yet I thought, having come so near the ruins 't were a pity not to indulge my former

whim, and presently was in its poor broken enclosure, and the dark thoughts I kept kennelled there, running to their master's hand, like spoiled hounds for a caress.

I may have stood there some ten uncounted minutes drowned in reverie, when the stagnant surface of my thought was troubled by the sounds of one walking up softly behind me, and I turned with a gripe upon my heart to confront a naked Indian.

He was a youth of open and pleasing countenance that forbade fear, so brown and endued to the colours of the woodland in his gaiters of stained buckskin, it might have been an Apollo of the Occident, or Antæus's American brother stood before me. I had no weapon, not even a dirk upon me, yet as I turned upon my heel, I put my hand from custom to my left side where a sword had hung for so long, with an hasty motion that made him throw up his hands above his shoulders, and at the same time he repeated my name very low and musical, giving its vowel the French accentuation which is much prettier than the other.

I asked him a little sharply, for I had been startled and my heart accelerated by the stealthy approach of him, who he was and whence he came, first in English then in such Indian as Calamy had taught me and which he seemed not to understand, so defaced was it probably between my mispronouncement and Shubaal's lack of memory: to all of which he repeated "Chibané! Chibané!"* in a very soothing tone, and at the same time flipped a little medal of brass which hung on a string around his neck as though he would have me examine it.

* It is well (Indian of the Lakes).

The medal was a little poor thing, yet more precious than gold or gems, for upon it was the image of her whose head Almighty God holdeth between his hands for all eternity, and a bitter, bitter reproach it was to my sin-stained soul to see my heavenly mother's image upon this poor savage's neck that should have been in my heart all these months, as though God would say to me, "see how the harlots and Samaritans come into the banquet and the children are cast forth," and in an access of shame and tenderness I lifted the little token to my perjured, defiled lips.

The poor savage creature's joy at this was touching to behold; he danced after their manner, first on one foot then on the other, patted me on the back and chattered into my ear in a strange jargon of French and barbarism, amid which I caught the words, "ami," "Marie," "Jesus," always winding up with his Chibané! which indeed I thought must be even such another word of good cheer as the shepherds watching amid their flocks on Bethlehem's hill-side, heard issuing from heaven.

The conversation which I had with this man was so disconnected, so eked out with signs and postures, though he gabbled incessantly, that 't would be tedious, nay impossible to narrate; but a wonderful thing it is to think how much of one another's intents and wishes we were able to understand with scarce ten words in common no more than had the dumfounded undertakers of Babel.

First, then, he let me know he had come a long way, closing his eyes and laying his head on his hand for each night's sleep, then holding up fingers to express their number: then, by a lively pantomime shewing forth the employment of their hours, so that, if I

remember rightly, he had walked five days, then gone ten in a canoe, walked other seven, besides escaping many dangers from enemies and wild beasts: one that befell him from a bear he acted in a manner so realistic, shambling and roaring, like that creature, then sitting up on his haunches and rubbing his eyes, to express the despair of the famished beast at his escape, I could not refrain from laughter, for all my grief, to which indeed this rencounter was a great diversion.

I asked him did he come from Pocumtuck, remembering Calamy had said there were French there, but he understood nothing by that word, indeed there are a dozen synonyms for every Indian town or tribe, a thing very much apiece in this land of shifts and subterfuges; then again how many were with him. He let me know he was alone, but for part of his journey had been accompanied by twenty-eight men, five Europeans and the others Indians; three of the white men he said were priests: he did this very prettily; making a little cross on the palms of his hands and going through the motion of breaking bread. (Oh! sacred and awful ministry! see even in this dark brain, thy sacrificial character so deeply imprest, that it standeth a symbol for thy name.) The remaining two were soldiers, and stout ones too, if horrible scowls and truculent carriage be a distinction of courage.

I asked him at last, in despair at these fleeting dark images, of what I began to feel was such an overwhelming providence from God's hand as might strike a blasphemer dumb — I say I besought him passionately, had he no letter for me nor document of any sort. I suppose the poor soul had been admonished to use great care in parting with this, but presently draws forth his knife, and having severed

some strings in his leather apron, he took out a folded document and gave it into my hand.

The paper was much creased and stained with sweat; it had no writing upon it that I could see; yet even as I turned it from back to front, perplexed and exasperated, suddenly the wilderness, the ruin, the Indian sank into the ground like a witch's vision and I was back in our refectory at Omers, one of many eager young faces crowded round the fire, "*flores martyrum*," predestined soldiers of Christ, waiting with bated breath and flushed cheeks while our master held the London letter to the fire, and little by little the blank sheet yielded up its story of one more good fight fought, one more palm branch won and garment washed white in the blood of the Lamb; I say a great blessed assurance of help took hold of me, like strong arms round a drowning man, and I knew that in this letter, written in the juice of the orange, God's secret purposes were made known.

Why did I not then and there enkindle a fire, make the paper deliver up its secret, give my hand to the Indian and go out of the land of bondage? There was not a quarter of an hour to go before we reached the primeval forest and were covered in by it as with a garment of invisibility. One road indeed we must cross, yet so early was the hour, none would be astir. 'T was not hunger I dreaded, for the woods at this season would supply us with game, nor nakedness, for the season was hot almost at night as in the day, and I had all I owned in the world upon my back. Oh! I say again, what outrageous fatality was this that made me delay my exodus, and turn back to the house of temptation.

'T was not my natural timidity nor hesitance. No! no! this poor Indian stood before me clothed with the majesty of God's purpose and armed with His power, no naked savage, but a mighty archangel, and when I clasped his hand I knew well I clasped God's

That 't was not love of my mistress sent me back, and a craving to behold her once again before our parting; this I know I shall never convince you; yet 't is the truth as God is my witness, and however little it may consort with my behaviour, that in my heart just now was more of repugnance than of yearning in her regard. Dearly indeed I loved her, yet it hath ever been a part of my nature rather to suffer circumstances rule my actions and appoint my ways than to contend with them, and in all the tempest of my railing the night before, 't will not have escaped you, I never once besought her to change her design, indeed was sorely troubled at her promise to wrestle with her father on my behalf. Can such a temper consist with great love? Do not lightly say no. Alas! not until one hath probed the recesses of his own heart, let him speak of his neighbours. I tell you there shall first be found a man without fault to hurl unblamed his stone. This much is true. Between my desire and the woman it seemed to me a chasm yawned, created by last night's upheaval, that I could not entertain myself with any prospect to pass over again; and upon this sweet recall from mine old friends, such a crop of virtuous memories and intentions sprung up, as fenced my way back even to its brink.

The truth must be spoken; 't was vanity, naught else, that worked my ruin and carried my stubborn feet back to those forbidden paths whence God had

turned them. That speech of my mistress concerning my friends yet rankled in my breast. My heart leapt at this chance to shew her I had them, strong, able and willing to serve me, and the providence before which as before a very vision of God, I should have prostrated myself, speechless and enraptured, I swore should be my justification with the woman I had loved and was to leave.

I bade the Indian lie close, promising to bring him food as soon as I had the letter deciphered, and went back to my hut, devising a thousand conceits and rehearsing a thousand postures whereby to sustain the dignity of our parting.

"Well, Diccon," I imagined my mistress saying, "sad though it is that I must leave you here to feed pigs and chickens for strangers, yet there is this crumb of comfort in it for me, that you will be the longer in forgetting your old mistress, who with all her faults was not unkind to you, than if you yourself were to begone, since I doubt not among these fields and barns will remain for awhile enough memories of me to check the natural inconstancy of a man."

To whom I would make reply.

"Nay, madam, herein is your wit at fault. Since my speech of last night much hath happened, and it seemeth, I no less am to take scrip and staff, and girding my loins, be off too."

Be sure she would say:

"And where are ye bound for, if one may ask?" looking me over with eyes of raillery, as was ever her wont, when I spoke of adventuring by myself, "into the woods to climb trees and eat nuts with squirrels?"

"Madam," I must answer chiding her gently, "your contempt in my regard carrieth you away too far.

America is not all the earth, nor is every sword beaten into a plough. Oh! Madam Agnes," would I say, taking her hand tenderly, "be sure that I shall remember ye until my death, but 't will be on battle fields and in camps as of old before I saw your face, not in stables and piggeries," for 't was thus my imagination, ever a profuse one, filled out that undeciphered letter in my pocket, and I thought a regiment of horse from the king of France or Spain the least I might look for.

"Never, never shall I forget you," I would continue, drying the tears that about this time must flow on my shoulders, "the sweet woman who warmed me at her fireside when I was a chill captive: the kind mistress whom I squired through wastes and woods. No other lips shall be ever as sweet to me as were yours; upon my heart, under my corselet, I will wear a tress of your hair, that when the slain are gleaned from the furrows of death, my poor stripped body may be found wearing your favour still. But" (a little brisker), "should fortune shew me a shining face and bring me to mine own once more, it shall go hard but I will find means to send you a token over miles of mountain and leagues of spray, that shall shew you he is your true knight still in court and palace, that was your clumsy squire in the day of trouble."

Lord! Lord I say what a delicious morsel was this gentle reproof in my mouth and how I rolled it under my tongue. Of all pleasures in life, there is none so exquisite as this, to have a noble part to play, and the assurance that one can act it nobly. To rehearse this one even, came near to bringing tears to my own eyes.

Calamy was dozing, but woke up at the crackle of the sticks.

"Simon," quavered the old fool, "are ye lighting a fire this July morning?"

"Yes," says I, lying, "I have wet my clothes driving out the cows and would dry them."

When the fire had gathered a little heat and I thought him asleep once more, I took the precious letter from my bosom and held it near the flame, my heart beating like a snared bird's as the script turned black under this fiery ordeal and delivered up its secret.

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam.

At Quissimet upon the Kennebec River,
in the country of the people called
Abenaki. Third of June, one
thousand six hundred and fifty two.

Dear Friend, and would I might add dear brother in the yoke of Jesus. God who knoweth the secrets of our hearts, knoweth also that there is in mine, besides that love which all men should bear one to the other as members of His mystical body, a very special love for those my brothers by adoption and fosterhood, warmed in the same bosom of our dear Society and nourished by its salutary constitutions; and that God's design hath permitted me to see few since of those who were companions of my noviciate or pupils of my tertianship hindereth not that their names are none the less graven on my heart and remembered in my daily oblation, but rather because I yearned upon them then, I more patiently await our reunion in that long vacation of heaven when the work shall be over and the wages paid. Therefore think not, although 't is accident as man would say, or Providence as we know how to interpret it, that hath put it into my hand to service you now, I would not of my own love and impatience long since have been your reinforcement in captivity had events so ordered

it, or that I do not to-day the more joyfully hasten to your side through these devious uncouth forest ways, because 't is Richard Fitzsimon I am bidden succour, my old charge in days when I was a poor raw harassed scholastic, whose authority was only a burden to himself, and you a merry urchin busy with its evasion and all manner of mischiefs. How often, during those dark days, when it seemed God had withdrawn His face from me, and I was like them that go down into the pit, before I had learned to despise all consolations save that one of being crucified with Him, how often, I say, hath your scowling black-browed tyrant watched you wistfully, your chubby face and elfish eyes, and while he chastised you envied you, that might still come near Him unafraid, being a little child.

I was ordained priest the month after you left Omers for the wars, at which hearing I was greatly grieved, for I had hoped to have you a fellow soldier in our spiritual combat, but God chooseth a different way with each one of us. I came out to Quebec in the third year of my ministry and was sent to this settlement, which God hath blessed abundantly. 'T is true that last year we were distressed not only by a raid from the Agnieri* that destroyed four of our little villages, but also by a famine and contagious plague that followed it during which corpses were dug out of their graves, and such horrors perpetrated as Josephus telleth of in his history; but if the harvest on earth be blighted so much greater harvest for heaven, and we count more than three thousand souls baptised before they died and sent into paradise with their white garments scarcely on their shoulders. Moreover this year we have had peace and plenty and God hath blessed the remnant of our people with temporal things. There is a company of soldiers arrived, thirty in number, from old France, who have builded us a stockade and fort, so that the Agnieri are quite bridled. Of these, two officers are with me now, M.

* Iroquois.

de Fontbruin, and M. Caraffa, an Italian gentleman of Gènes, both pupils of our colleges.

But, you will say, wherein doth all this touch me? How am I advantaged or concerned therein? Patience, Richard. I will now take up the tale of your own adventures that you may see how slight threads can be knit by God's fingers.

Imprimis. About the month of October last, the civic troubles in England being somewhat abated, M. Courtois, rector at Eu, and doyen of the teaching faculty in our colleges, wrote unto Father Foster, the Provincial in England, and sent to him at the same time, a list of certain alumni known to have been concerned in that combustion; begging him to supply from his own knowledge, or upon inquisition by familiars of the Society throughout England, an endorsement upon the name of each one, in order that it might be known how they were to be remembered henceforth in the commemoration of the Holy Sacrifice; among living or dead? the Ecclesia militans or triumphans. Among them, it seems, was your own name, which was returned with a very dubious endorsement; for whereas some said you were slain in the battle of Vigant [Wigan] and that they had seen your dead body there in the streets, another deposed to seeing you alive on the evening of Worcester, but that you had been executed by drumhead that night and your horse sold to his informant. But now mark the hand of God! A little later at the feast of Hallow mass there was a meeting of clergy, our order and others, at the Venetian Ambassador's in London and the matter of this list being discussed and the names read over they call out after yours: "Dead at Worcester!" "Why how is that?" says one Mr. Sharpless, a licensed Benedictine, "since I met Mr. Fitzsimon going into France and confessed him myself the day after the battle." Whereat there was great to do made and interest among those present, more perhaps than had your fate been known for certain, since 't is the nature of men to marvel at the contradictory and seek to solve riddles. 'Tis not necessary, in order to shew

you the hand of God in all this business, that I should detail you every step along the road that leads us to you here, how you were traced first to a Mr. Hart a miller, then among the captives to London, then to the prison du Maréchal, whence a certain great lady, a "*magnata mulier*," procured your enlargement. These things will be no marvel to you, who know something of our constitution, and how God can make the secret things plain to those who seek with the illumination of His justice for their lanthorn. In Boston indeed we have no agent, though Père Druilletes of our order sought two years ago to establish one there, and could not find a Catholic in all that barren town, though seven just were found in Sodom, but again where our efforts seemed at fault, the hand of God supplied for us.

It seems a week after your arrival there, there was a Spanish trading ship driven into Boston, by storm, and though none of the crew were suffered land, yet the two owners, being aboard, were entertained very handsomely, they said, with a design of trade. This ship was captured by one of our frigates, soon after she had put to sea again, and being brought into Kebec, these two gentlemen who were guests of the archbishop during their stay in the town, had much discourse of a certain Fitzsimon a Catholic, who had been a prisoner in Boston during their visit, and had gone up into the Kenetigout as a slave. Many things they also said of you which I doubt not are inventions, as that you went to their heretical church every Sunday, where they had had you pointed out. This I would not believe of you; and what was their own business in these conventicles? He that hath eaten the bread of the children should not endure even the stench of the swill. Herein I think was great scandal given, and their losing their ship a judgment upon them.

There was already a letter in Kebec from Father Foster, written when 't was known you had gone to New England. Naught therefore remained, but to send unto me, as the nighest of our missions, all this

intelligence, with an instruction to me to do my utmost to come at you and deliver you "*de manu inimicorum.*" It chanced by great good fortune that at the time of this letter reaching us, which was with the soldiers, our fathers here were contemplating sending a mission into the country of the Narghansetts to beg their aid in repulsing the bloody Iroquois who are the scourge of God to our poor catechumens. Help from the New Englanders we have already sought, but in vain. They turn unto us a deaf ear and a heart of stone, being very willing the infant Church should perish at the hand of these savages, who are scarce fiercer or more bloody than they, and excusing themselves upon the pretence that a few beggarly musquets and arquebuses have been sold by us to the Narghansetts. Let them beware! God is not mocked, but can raise up instruments of His wrath where He willeth, and by the weak confound the cunning. But be comforted, for we are near you. I write this in our camp at Quissimet five days from Quinipiack River, using the juice of a citron and an eagle's quill. Would I could send you his whole wings, to bind upon your shoulders and fly to us, but haply you would have no better luck than Icarus. We must use the slower way: *pes et patientia stadias vincit.* The Indian who beareth you this, Barthelemy Chigounapick, will bring you to our camp as Raphael brought Tobit; he hath a wonderful sagacity and no wilderness but giveth him up its clue. He is also a most chosen and holy servant of God; his devotion to the Holy Mother especially is a matter of edification to all. In the late war, having seized an Iroquois prisoner, he would not dispatch him with his tomahawk until he had dragged him, at infinite risk to himself, for the man struggled desperately, near a stream and poured water upon his head, "to make soul white" as himself said, knowing nothing, poor creature of intentions.

By whose help the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and the special intercession of the Blessed and Immaculate Mother of God, St.

Joseph her most pure spouse, and all the Saints, may you soon be at the side of him who writes himself though unworthy, your dear friend, and humble and obedient servant in Christ Jesus,

VICTOR JOGUES,
Presbyter docens.

Pax Christi.

POST SCRIPTUM: If you can bring some arquebus powder with you, 't will be of service, a part of ours having overset during a portage.

I had scarce done the reading of this, and pressed my lips to the superscription, when the door of our hut was burst violently inwards and my mistress stood in the room. I gaped at her as at a ghost, and tried to thrust the paper under my waistcoat.

"Are ye never coming to breakfast," said she; "with all there is to be done to-day. What have you there in your hand?"

I stammered out some evasion about my petition.

"Let be your petition to-day, Richard," said she, looking upon me with eyes that were not at all heavy nor sad for all last night's tempest of tears. She tiptoed over to where Calamy lay and having assured herself he was asleep, came across the room and gave me a great kiss full on my mouth.

"Let be!" says I, a little uneasy in her arms, for, considered where my thoughts had been in the last hour, I felt her caress as though 't were a profanation. "Let be! Calamy will see us."

"What matters it?" said she, "the last day."

"There must come a last day to everything, madam," said I, considering as I followed her to the house, how I should begin to tell her my news.

"True, oh philosopher," she answers, her eyes

alight with mischief, "yet what should you say if I told you ours was not yet arrived?"

"What mean you?" I asked, stopping short with an uneasy stir at my heart.

We were come by now behind the porch of the house and she could keep her secret no longer. Pulling me to one side she flung her arms round my neck and sobbed hysterically into my ear.

"Diccon! Diccon! they are to go and I to stay. Do ye hear me man? To-night you shall come to me and I will make amends for all. Oh! sweetheart, sweetheart, is not love kind to us?"

Had she not clung to me, I think I must have fallen; as 't was my tongue clove to my palate so that I could not speak, yet though there was no sound in my mouth, at my heart be sure a great cry went up to heaven. Even so the hare that hath adventured once too oft his foolish head may cry in the silence of some frosty night, feeling the steel jaws about his neck. Oh how warily he snuffed the snare, how daintily nibbled the bait! No matter now: the springe must fly, the teeth must close at last, and in the danger he hath loved he perisheth, unpitied and alone.

CHAPTER XIV

'T IS a wonderful thing, and such as I can scarce credit of myself now, yet no less true, that throughout the whole of that day I established a truce or armistice within myself, making both my good and bad angels set their hands to its articles, that nothing should be done therein nor no decision required of me until night; for my distraught and crazy soul was now become like unto a great city upon the eve of revolt, wherein men run hither and thither under cloaks and vizards, now gathered together in some secret chamber to abate with mutual entertainment the agonies of suspense, now out again in the murmuring streets to glean their rumours and whispers; so, I say, within the polity of my soul, though all its populace looked the one way, strained their eyes unto one unaccomplished, dubious and imminent hour wherein God's empire or Satan's must be once for all established; though I concealed not from myself that the hours of delays and evasions were counted and their sands running out fast, the last sun about to decline either upon my love or my innocence; yet would I not by one hour or one minute forestall that upheaval, and throughout all the day's labours and offices let the partisans of heaven and hell roam at will, brushing by one another's shoulders and glancing into one another's eyes their mutual defiance, the while I, minding them not, set my hands unto my work with as cheerful an assurance as

though no crisis lurked within the night at all and curfew instead of tocsin should summon him in.

For first, there was all the bustle and preparation incident to Gideon's departure, the greater for being left so late. I must bear a hand in loading of pack horses, cleaning of arms, and charging of bandoliers. His company were all of Summerfield, but my master, as one of the partners in this undertaking, furnished the greater part of their supplies; he himself when all was completed riding with them as far as the town and thence taking the river down to Newhaven, so that I think I rode the five miles into the town and back, three several times on that day. The inhabitants were in a great posture of excitement; their wives weeping and clinging round these adventurers as though there were untold perils confronting them, and dragons, not trees, to be lopped from their path, before they and their bantlings might follow. Among all this weeping, chattering crowd, the Indian guides that were to go with them and be the instruments of their own outcasting, spies to discover their own nakedness, strode or stood, stolid and enigmatical as the Theban sphinx, or sate smoking together upon the long bridge, watching my master's flotilla swing at the stakes below, with wistful eyes cast upon the stores and arms that were being bestowed therein. The day was nigh done and the sun's furnace abated to a red glow, the forest pioneers ridden off with a great cheering and singing of hymns, and the folk gone back to their suppers, before my master embarked. He stood awhile at the bridge head, his face turned in the direction of that home which he never should have left, yet God knoweth that fever 't was in this man's soul that would not let him rest. I think his lips

moved a little, and oh, what a lonesome sad figure was his, standing there, the sky behind him like a world in conflagration, none to bid him Godspeed of all that town and people which he had led into the wilderness and sustained with the might of his arm, only one poor slave and captive! What remorse, what ruth and shame filled my soul, as I looked at him, thinking 't was this man's home I was about to pollute, the kind master that had fed me from his own table and clad me from his closet, who had muffled my fetters with his indulgence, and laid upon my shoulders a yoke infinitely lighter than that which he bore uncomplainingly: who trusted me, oh, that was the bitterest reproach of all, trusted me with what was dearer to him than life: in the solitude of the forest, in the obscurity of night, when no eye but God's should watch me, and every whispering leaf be clamorous with incitement.

I think that even then had he spoken to me one word upon the tremendous charge that was laid upon my honour, I could have contained myself no longer, but all must have bolted out. Remember: I was but an apprentice then in this deadly and adulterous science of intrigue; my heart was not yet calloused to find a zest in its darkness and double dealing beyond all delights of honest courtships. Kisses snatched behind curtains, knees pressed together under the board, the lip to one and the hands' pressure to another, these are love's proper condiment to some men, who would find it savourless without, but to me their spice was still poison, sweet in the mouth perhaps but bitter in the belly

Instead, he gives me naught but general instructions, as to exercise the horses that were not ridden or

worked, to keep an eye upon the ways of the labouring men, and for my own sake to be as little in the town as was possible; in all matters he bade me obey my mistress, who would be steward for him during his absence.

"If aught should mischance," said he, "apply yourself to Mr. Chapin in the town here, he is a friend to our house beyond the others."

I watched the boats until they had turned the bend of the river, thinking how that good, single, simple old man would turn his face toward us at the hour of prayer, ignorant what a fire of hell would by then be kindling on his defiled hearth. When I turned to make for home, there was the Indian, Queasy, sitting at my back. I know not whether he had crept up unnoticed during my abstraction or alone had remained of all the Indians who had watched the embarkation, but there he sat very composed, his knees up to his chin, and his brawny arms clasped round them.

"What cheer, Master Simon?" says the creature, grinning up at me, "Why you not go with others to the great lake?"

"I am left behind, Robin," says I, "with the squaws and children."

The Indian threw back his head and laughed immoderately as though this were a great wag. His ho! ho! resounded and was echoed down the river, and must have been heard by the little fleet, who doubtless marvelled at the mocking spirit who made merry over their departure.

"No, no," says he, getting to his feet and speaking close at my ear, "Queasy a very wise Indian, can tell you where you are bound for now."

"Tell me, Queasy," says I, thinking I could scarce answer the *Quo Vadis* myself as yet.

"You tell me," repeats he very confidential. "You met strange Indian at the old house."

It was no surprise to me to find he had been privy to our meeting; nay, more than this, I had before now guessed the rendezvous was in part his work, remembering his speech to me on the night of the housewarming. Among these people intelligence travels amazingly fast, none knoweth how, by smoke signals, blowing stones, and such matters, and 't is like he had known an Indian was in search of me then. I had no fear of his treachery, but thought I should bid him be secret.

"What," says he, striking his breast, "you think Queasy same as one dog. No, no! both prisoners, both hate Yenghi. You know what Indians say? 'Same totem make friends, two sticks make fire,'" and he rubbed his hands together as though he would set them ablaze.

I mused a little while.

"Queasy," says I, "will you get on a horse and come back to the farm with me? I want you to take a letter to this Indian."

"To that house to-night," says the man frowning, and shaking all over, "too much afraid Abemachoo live there" (that is the devil).

"Abemachoo will not hurt you," I told him, "he has other business on hand I fear to-night; and if you take the message I will give you my pipe that you ask for so much often."

He hesitated a while, betwixt his fear and cupidity, for this pipe he coveted out of all measure since the night I had let him smoke it, and there was hardly a week passed but he did not come to our hut, for he was forbid the house, with some poor trash to trade

away for it; reed bracelets, skin slippers, shell necklaces and the like. I had the pipe now with me in my pocket, and taking it out, smoothed the bowl lovingly against my cheek. This was too strong an incitement for the Indian to resist, and leaping on to one of the pack horses as lightly as a grass-hopper from the ground, he rode back with me through the forest.

There was one thing I foresaw I must no longer defer but do out of hand; not because I had yet taken my party, for I think I indulged that commodity of a double Janus-faced policy nearer to the committal of intention into action than ever any man before or since; but I say I must now write such a letter to Father Jogues, my friend and would be my saviour, to send by the hand of the Indian messenger when I took or sent him his food, as might explain my not accompanying him, always that is, in the event I should so decide; because if I put it off, until my mind was made up to remain (and before that I foresaw such a struggle as all my battles hitherto were nothing compared to it), why then I must either abridge my dubious period by enough time to write one, when God knoweth my mind should be little disposed to it, or send my message by a short sullen word of mouth, which might easy be misinterpreted, seeing what a savage inexpert ambassador I must entrust it to.

So when we were arrived at the farm, first I put the Indian off his horse, and bade him wait behind the fowl-house until I returned to him; then I took the horses into their stable by a back way through the stack yard, that no rumour of them reach to the kitchen, last of all I stole into my own poor lodging, and, having nailed a blanket over the window lest the light discover me, for 't was now turned dusk, I took

pen, ink, and paper, and sitting down under the flaming pine candle, composed such a vile lying letter, filled with blasphemies and excuses for sin, I wonder God did not then and there wither the arm that forged them.

First I bade my old master put out of his head that memory he had taken of me from Chartres, and strive to imagine the mischievous merry lad four years later, smitten with the passions and temptations of adolescence, tortured by its unreasoning scruples, and standing with trembling knees upon the threshold of spirituality; committed by the inscrutable will of God, at the moment when a spiritual physician and gentle doctor was the need of his sick soul, to the terrifying regimen and direction of such a one (here I named a certain man he would know well) of whom 't was said even by his brothers and superiors in religion, he would have gone past the severity of God and saved, not some men, but all men by fire. Conceive me, says I, on the morning of my first Communion, for which this man had prepared me, with injunctions and threats against eating unworthily, tottering to the supreme mystery of God's love with quivering lips, like a culprit to the block, and never afterward able to receive but with a renewal of these terrors, and a period of dryness and desolation to follow. Then, said I, will you wonder that as I grew to man's estate the idea of a continuance under so fiery a discipline became intolerable to me, nay, I could not but expect there were worse terrors in store for me, did I persevere in my design of the ministry, to which these had been but an initiation, and from them I shrank aghast, since it seemed in this awful covenant damnation was as easy to be found as salvation. I might have turned to sin

in the revulsion of my nature; instead I chose a calling that should keep my body racked and my soul upon the brink of eternity, wherein I trusted, if I did my duty and lived sinless, I might at the end escape eternal fire, for to this was my hope dwindled now. But alas! who shall disarm the severity of God, who exhaust His judgments? Since that day, successively my family, my wealth, my employment, and my liberty have been demanded from me. Truly the word "To him who hath it shall be given" standeth no less true of judgments than of mercies. And now, you will say, to such a poor stripped wretch the time was come to have mercy and spare. Dream it not! One torture lacked until now, and it is supplied: one sacrifice I had never made, your letter demandeth it, and from this inflexibility and incessancy my soul turns in speechless loathing. That yoke which was promised me should be sweet, I have found of red hot iron; that burden whose lightness invited me, I writhe from under to-day crushed and bleeding, *vermis non homo*, a worm and no man.

Then did I go on to tell him of my mistress and her love for me, in which narrative though 't would be hard to say precisely I lied, yet I doubt not equivocation was everywhere to be discerned. As, now, when I would make a panegyric of my mistress and her tenderness to me, I quite overpassed those roughnesses and incivilities of which I have not told you the half, and which, had I not been so besottedly bent on mine own ruin, might have been my saving, aloes and wormwood laid at her breasts to wean me from her: now though I dwelled on the virulence of the temptations to my senses, not to be contended with away from all reinforcements of religion, how comes it, I

say, that I mentioned not that natural modesty and shamefacedness of mine before women, which was an armament implanted by God in my very nature to avail me in just such a day of trial.

Enough, enough of this beastly letter, wherein I lacked less for words than for time to set them down, since in this business I was Satan's own stenographer, and he was at my shoulder with fresh arguments when my own ingenuity failed to supply them. I concluded it with the most monstrous piece of sophism, surely, that ever was uttered out of hell.

"I have forsook," says I, "the old covenant of justification, having found it too full of peril and discomfort and now throw myself on the covenant of mercy, believing I shall find in the end more indulgence from God that way than the other. Since His own Son died for sinners, time I was one and took my share of the ransom. Is there less mercy for me who have remembered my Creator all the days of my youth and only fall now because I am tempted over my strength than for the drunken troopers I have seen slain at my side or the naked Indians whom you baptise at the stake? Back," says I, "back to your painted catechumens, happy souls that can be taught their religion as children their letters, by pictures and emblems, and would I were of them, whose knowledge is turned my ruin! Pray for me if you will, and oh, if prayers of such as I can avail, you shall have them a plenty. But believe this, the die is cast for me; I have slain my manhood long enough to no purpose, and this very night Richard Fitzsimon, the wonder of Chartres for his wisdom, of St. Omers for his piety, shall be in the arms of the woman who loveth him, and whom he loves."

This precious document once finished, and believe me, I scribbled it so hastily, with such fearful glances at the door lest my mistress come in and all stand revealed, that before the end 't was such a sorry scribble as the devil may snatch from the shaking hand of one that hath just compacted away his salvation: the letter finished, I say, I must go out and give it to the Indian fiddler, and when I had found him, into the kitchen to get some food for the poor soul whose hungry belly had been a reproach to me all day, a thing I foresaw would be attended with difficulty, for Mrs. Agnes was very sharp and curious.

Before I left our house I took the torch and went over to look at Calamy, from whom I thought some very strange sounds had proceeded during the writing of my letter. I found him in a condition of collapse that frightened me. His breath seemed to come up through the whole of his body and to be expired with difficulty, while the intake was attended with such a spasm as shook the bed and looked like rending his chest.

I found my mistress with her head at that window that commanded the road, and the table set. She started when I came in behind her and looked at me in surprise.

"Are ye but just come back?" she said, "I began to think you had gone with them to New Haven."

"Grout kept us long at the preaching," says I, lying.

"How comes it I saw you not when you entered the yard just now?" she asked suspiciously.

Lies were easy to me now, and I told her I had come over the bridge and back across the ford, to have the company of some others that lived the other side the brook.

"You are forever seeking to pass that ruin," she said, fretfully, "I know not what attraction it has for you. Do ye keep a famillar spirit there?"

I might have told her with truth that all my life now must be a ruin and haunt of evil spirits. But to what end? I was better silent.

"Did ye see my father well bestowed?" she asks presently.

I told her they had had a fair start, and the wind favouring them.

"Did he leave you any adviso upon me?" looking at me shrewdly.

"Only to obey my mistress," says I.

"And are ye going to do so?" she asks me, coming over to me across the room and putting her arm across my shoulders.

I told her I would obey her, not feeling at all sure upon the point.

"Well, then," says she, "sit down to table and while we eat I will tell you what must be done by us that no suspicion rest upon this Ark of Election."

"Oh," I would have told her, "let us not be froward out of all measure nor tempt God beyond the sad necessity of our sin! To err is human and may be forgiven, but to revile goodness — this goeth beyond pardon; this is to sin with Satan — to share the iniquity of devils and the eternal offence of the damned."

But instead, all my concern just now was to get her out of the kitchen for ten minutes while I made provision for the Indian. I bethought me of Calamy and asked her would she not first go in and see him.

"See Calamy," she repeated in surprise, "why should I go see him?"

I told her I thought the old servant was in a parlous state.

"Yes," said she, "and hath been this five years, and shall be another five unless the devil foreclose his bargain."

"Indeed, madam," says I, "to-night he is scarce able to breathe."

"All asthmatics are the same," she said, "no doubt he was snoring."

"I woke him," I ventured to persist, "and he could not speak to me."

She knitted her brows a little at this, and then took down his bowl from the shelf.

"I will go across," said she, when she had poured out his broth, "and take him his supper. Will you please to light me?"

"Why, Madam Agnes," said I, "the moon is up."

She stared upon me, but it seemed my unmannerliness passed by her, because of some other trouble or preoccupation in her head. She stood awhile as if in thought, then went from the house without a word.

No sooner was she gone than I flew to the bread pan and took out a great new loaf and some broken bread, to the larder for a hunch of salt meat. I dared not pass through the orchard lest I encounter her, and an agonising thing it was to set down all my load in the darkness and open the great door, whose fastenings I was acquainted with, and which turned on its hinges with an horrid harsh screech that I wonder was not heard at the cottage. As I was leaving the house I bethought myself of the powder, and going back to the armcloset stole about four pounds of a broken sack, my heart aching at all this lying and thieving in a house where I was so trusted.

I ran across the yard as fast as I could for my burden, and found Queasy the fiddler squatting where I had left him. I put the provisions and powder into his lap, then said I:

"Harkee, Robin, can you take a message to Indian besides the letter."

He nodded his head, being busy stowing away the food about his person.

"Well," says I, "you have the letter" (he feels for the letter), "you are to give this to the Indian and bid him wait for me to-night by the tree until moon-set. If I do not come by then, to wait no longer, but to sew letter in his apron, and run, run back fast to his own country. Now, Queasy, you understand me well?"

"Yes, yes, Master Simon," says he and repeated my message very correctly.

"Above all," I told him, "not to wait, for if I come not before the moon is down, I come not at all. Now run," says I, "here is your pipe."

He begged me for some tobacco to boot and I gave him all I had in my pockets; then for the little locket, which his sharp eyes had noticed round my neck, for this is the Indian fashion of bargaining. I told him, to be rid of him, I might give him something on the morrow, if he returned to me, this I promised in an agony of haste, for I thought I could hear my mistress calling to me across the yard. I doubled back to the house, keeping in the shadows, and came out from the orchard just as she lost patience and was starting for the house.

"Where have you been?" she asks angrily and breathlessly. "I have been calling you for the last quarter of an hour."

I told her I heard her not from the house.

"Is Calamy sick?" says I, noticing the trouble in her face. "Will he die?"

"To be sure he will die," says she roughly, "and you and I as well. Do not stand gaping upon me," she added as I would have asked her more, "'t is the greatest fault of all in you, Richard, your slackness in any emergency."

"What must I do?" says I desperately, "I cannot act until you tell me."

She bade me bring from the house a jar of hemp that stood on a by-shelf near the fireplace, a kettle of water and some old napkins of linen. When I returned with them she had already raked together the ashes of the fire I had lighted that morning to read the priest's message by, and had rekindled them. When the water was boiling, she threw in two great handfulls of the hemp and prepared a poultice for the sick man.

"Go back to the house," said she, after she had raised him up in his bed, into which it seemed he slipped lower every moment, "go back to the house and bring the flask of rum. His heart is near stopped."

I ran briskly on her errands, not sorry to have some occupation that would give me a respite from the anguish of my mind, and thinking may be this agony of the old servant might give us an occupation for the whole night. I was in a humour to clutch at any straw.

It was pretty to see the dexterity and handiness with which she handled the old pirate, turned him on his face and applied the poultice to his spine, holding him down in place when the pain made him writhe and moan. I tried to help her but my hands seemed ever in the way of hers, so that at last I gave over and stood aside, uneasily, with all the awkwardness and humiliation of the inexpert at such a crisis.

After a while, Calamy lay a little easier, and the colour came back into his livid cheeks, though he continued moaning.

"Were it any other night," says my mistress, putting back her hair off her forehead with the back of her hands, "I would take him into the house, but I think there is no need. He will cheat the devil yet awhile."

"I pray you," says I, "do not speak so loudly. Such mementos must be painful for him to hear."

"I do not think," says she, "he dreads my words so much as your handling, Richard. He winced sorely once or twice when you grasped him. 'T is a way you delicate people have. And now," says she, giving me a kiss as one gives a docile child, "let us to supper if any is unspoiled."

We were very silent during the meal. The same thought was in both of our heads, and there was no topic of converse we could invent that was not a channel for its escape down the declivity of these last hours. My heart beat fast, my cheeks and forehead burned like fire, and I had trouble in swallowing. If my mistress felt any agitation 't was well concealed, unless perhaps she was a little paler than ordinary, but I think she understood mine well enough, for once, when she asked me some indifferent question concerning her father and I could not answer she did not press me. In lawful espousals, which have God for their guarantor and his sacrament for their girdle, these moments spent as 't were on the threshold of the bridal chamber have, I can well believe, a sacred and passionate tenderness all their own, and may well be the last and fondest remembered in days to come when the hair is white and the blood chill. This is

hallowed love; alas for its travesty. You see them now, the prologue to my punishment.

As for my mistress, I have since thought there may have been more of design than insensibility in her carriage toward me during the last hours of my indecision, for she was a very witty, understanding woman, and I think even at this time not unadvised of those supernatural terrors that hedged her from me, so thought it best by ignoring them altogether to assure my quailing spirit. There is no man so wise nor so wary, that he is not dependent for his present conceptions upon the manner of those round him. I have seen soldiers awaiting an assault look into one another's eyes to read their danger, although its discovery was plain to be made in front of them by one no better than another, If he is accursed that removeth his neighbour's landmark, what shall be said of him who shifts those which heaven hath set upon the debatable ground twixt good and ill, which have God's escutcheon on the one side and the devil's on the other?

When supper was done.

"Who pinned the blanket across Shubaal's window?" says my mistress.

"Why, himself, I suppose," says I, "his eyes are weak."

"But not so weak as his legs," said she, "to get up on a chair and hammer in two spikes."

"I know not what other would do it," I said.

"You lie, sweetheart, you lie;" says she, but not angrily.

Now was my opportunity; why did I not say:

"Yes, I do lie, and have lied throughout. Yes, I did pin up the blanket, and for the same reason would I

have begged the mountains to fall on me, the hills to cover me while I wrote that blasphemous letter and abused my conscience. Let me begone!" I should have told her, "if not because you have no pity on my soul, then because you shall have scant pleasure or comfort in me, who have lived righteous so long that the fashions of sin will not sit upon me at the end."

Instead, I sate at the table with my head upon my hands and my fingers through my hair, a miserable, perplexed man.

So fast and swift did these words rise from my heart, like bubbles from a deep well, filling my mouth with their resonance, and seeking to force a passage through my stubborn lips; I say, so natural and complete was the motion to give them voice, to which nothing was lacking save the mechanical part; I suddenly had the hallucination that I had indeed spoken them, and I looked up into Mrs. Agnes's face to see how they affected her. But I had said not a word: she sate still opposite to me, regarding me with eyes unfathomable as a ravine filled with clouds.

We rose together and she smoothed the ruffled hair above my forehead.

"Go over to the house Richard," said she, as though setting me at my daily tasks," and shift your work-a-day suit. Be sure before you come over again that Calamy is sleeping."

"The Negro lasses?" I stammered.

"They are my concern," she said, "and will by then be sleeping too. But you are never to mind them. They have neither eyes to see nor ears to hear but as I bid them."

CHAPTER XV

I REELED across to our hut like a drunken man, seeing a moon dancing and trees running at my side, and entering that hot and fetid sick chamber, flung myself face downwards on my bed and took the bedclothes between my teeth like a soldier awaiting the lash. And now indeed the truce within me was ended; now indeed out from corners and refuges where they had been thrust, rushed forth the ghostly combatants; forgotten admonitions, abandoned prayers, perjured vows, broke their prisons, struck off their fetters, grasped their weapons, and in one last forlorn attempt to save my soul, flung themselves upon the evil counsellors who had usurped their places within me, while upon the last unyielded breastwork my good and evil angels swayed and wrestled in a deadly grip.

There was one cry rang out above all their clamour and fury, incessant and changeless as the alarum from a steeple. Fly, fly! fly! it repeated, giving no reason, admitting no argument, tiring not, not abating nor increasing its volume; a laconic counsellor, an inarticulate accuser, God's ultimate mercy; and the passing bell of my innocence. But below the august height of that despotic decree, what threats, complaints and exhortations! what pitiful appeals of the flesh for quarter and what a stark denial of it from the spirit! what a flutter and scurry of lies and sophistries from one dark wynd and alley to another, as that all-searching, all-illuminating pencil from the eye of God;

that *conscientia* or knowledge shared *with* Him, inexorable and infallible as Himself, whose judgment His own shall but confirm, whose sentences His curse or blessing shall but promulgate, filled the recesses of my heart.

"You have fallen already," says the devil, "when your eye lusted then your innocence ended. When you gave me your bond to sin, then you became my servant. Protest it or pay it now as you will. God hath no longer part in you."

"'T is a lie," my conscience tells me, "apparent on its face. If you were the devil's assured prey, think you there would be this turmoil at your heart to-night? Doth a man strive with a fettered prisoner? Is there contention in dungeons? No! no! you have sinned 't is true; you have brought yourself into terrible straits, but 't is the will of God that hardness of heart, that bent of the whole mind to sin, which is the unpardonable offence, shall not ensue until evil designs are consummated.

Said the devil: "Say this is so; this is of all sins the one most easily pardoned by God. All the others, as hatred and violence, came into man's heart after his fall. This instinct was put into it in paradise when God gave him a partner, saying, 't is not good for man to be alone.

Said my conscience: "'T is the sin not least, but most hated by God, against which so sure a penalty is to be apprehended, that Himself hath said: 'He who committeth it, committeth foolishness,' the key-stone of the vault of hell, which no soul enters but it has added this sin to the others."

"But," says the tempter, "regard the licence allowed by God to men of old in this regard. Has

human nature so changed that what was neither fault nor folly in them is a crime in you."

"When they lived," replies my conscience, "God had not been thirty years a man to sanctify human nature, nor died to redeem it. They were not baptised by the Holy Ghost nor anointed by the chrism of Salvation, they washed not their robes in the blood of the Lamb, nor ate the food of angels, the bread that maketh virgins.

"But," urged Satan persistently, "those sacraments you no longer receive. God hath sent you into a dry wilderness, far from all means of grace, and there hath ensnared you in a temptation you would have been hard put to resist in your convent. He hath promised not to tempt you above your strength, and now hath forgotten His promise. The responsibility is yours no longer, but His."

"What!" said my conscience in a terrible thunderous loud voice, "do ye dare say He hath led you astray and overtempted you. 'T is a lie and blasphemy above all you have uttered. In the hottest hour of your temptation he sent the Indian to you; as though that dramatic period were chosen by Himself to convince you of His hand in this Providence."

"But 't is now to late," I wailed before my terrible judge! "the letter is written, the rendezvous made!"

"No! no! Richard," answers conscience, "the letter is all nothing, there is still time, for the moon hath not yet set. Come, take your pack and go down by the ford. There shall the Indian come presently and you may put your hand in his like Peter from his prison, and he will lead you out of bondage and away from temptation, back to your true friends and brothers in Christ."

"And your mistress," jeers the evil one, tugging at my sleeve; "will ye leave her to sit there awaiting you; a forsworn lover, a cavalier turned monk? How will she laugh and scoff at you, as every true man and woman that shall hear of it. Or more like she will weep for you, as she did only last night, when she rocked you in her arms — have ye forgotten that — and you poured forth your vows into her bosom. You have set yourself too deep in her heart; you cannot tear yourself loose now without wounding her mortally. And as for your creed; say you save your virtue, 't is at the expense of your truth."

My heart sickened at hearing the devil's arguments grown so desperate, for I thought 't was a sign that grace was prevailing and forcing me upon the hard path.

"I will go and see her once to bid her farewell," says I, at last, "and then go on my road." My soul grew a little calmer for reaching even this sham and halting resolution.

"That may not be," says relentless conscience again, "if you pass her door you are a lost man. Rise quickly and bustle, the time is scant enough now to get to the tree before the Indian has left it."

I sate upon the bed, racked and tortured; the sweat running down my forehead, my fear and my desire grinding against each other like two edges of a snapped bone and filling my soul with an excruciating anguish that was like a foretaste of hell. "What an epithalamium!" thinks I, "here is a canticle in truth! What a pale-cheeked, quavering wretch shall presently crawl into my mistress's house to crown our love. Oh! why was I ever born? What eternity can repay me for this?"

I went over to Shubaal and looked at him as he lay there, asleep and a little eased. The old man's face was the colour of ashes; his bristly dropped jaw shewed the broken yellow old teeth. He might have been a dead man already but for the snuffling breath that sounded in his throat, each inspiration of which seemed like to be his last.

"Yes," said I, "sinking into the grave as ye are; yours is the life I would choose to-night before mine own. Buccaneer, Indian chief, with your three fair wives, your squaws, and carib light-o'-loves. Oh! 't is easy known none ever sent you to an accursed seminary to have the fear of hell mixed into the marrow of your bones.

I opened the door of our hut and looked out. The wind had begun to rise and the trees to toss their branches like seaweed upon a flowing tide. The moon was nearing her acclivity, troubled by clouds which she threw one after another from off her baffled face, The purl of the river over its stones, the soft buffet of the wind, the sounds and scents of the night were very sweet indeed to my fevered flesh and brain.

Then I began to wash my face and hands; to comb my hair and shift my work-a-day clothes; but with such trembling numb fingers and a mind so disordered that I donned some of the old clothes again by mistake, and would lay down a thing out of my hand, and turn away to seek it, or seek with it all the time in my hand, as I did with one of my shoes, and my conscience all this time never once ceasing at my ear, like a querulous repining woman.

"Why put you on these good clothes, Richard? They are not the fittest for the forest whither you are bound?"

With whom I argued no longer, being and moving like a night walker or noctambulo who rises and dresses in his sleep. Beyond all I longed for this intolerable night to be over and its decision put past recall. Could I have gone to sleep indeed and have awoke in the morning, conscious in the interval neither of pleasure nor effort, although the sin and its penalty stayed the same; 't is this I would have chosen now. For pleasure indeed I looked no longer; being quite consumed by the fire and torture of my ordeal; and so wearied out was I become at length with all this strife, that the power to decide one way or the other seemed to have gone from me, and I rather to be carried onward toward the catastrophe by the impetus of old words and deeds which I might repent or rue if I would, but not recall; so might one weary of life cast himself into a swift running river and with the roar of the cataract in his ears, and the end assured him, cheat God of a pardon in mid-stream.

As soon as I judged an hour to have sped, and oh! how hard 't was for me to compute time, who one truly might say had spent the period in eternity; busy with its issues, harkening its voices and experiencing its tortures, I say, when I judged an hour gone, I opened and closed the door quietly so as not to awaken Calamy, and walked toward the house, slowly and breathing hard, as a man walks toward some ruthless purpose who hath suppliants clinging at his knees whom he will neither cast roughly off, nor be moved from his will by their prayers; but before I unlatched the wicket, first I looked a little space upon the house, steeped in moonlight, wherein I had spent so many an innocent blameless hour, the darkened window of the room where I had prayed and disputed with my

simple old master, the orchard beneath whose shade my spirit had spent itself in passionate embraces, in sighs and vows and tears, Ah! how sweet, how precious those memories seemed unto me now before I defiled and shattered them forever. Yes, now with the clarity that torture sometimes gives, I saw how their bait had entrapped me. 'T was because my own home stood in my memory for all that was fragrant and godly and of fair report, wherein not only were such things unacted but undreamed of; because I say 't was no part of my education nor experience that under such a homely roof, by the side of this reverend old man, amid the low of cattle, scents of harvest, all the honest occupations of the day, sin also could be sown, and germinate and come to reaping. There are some that in the accessories of evil find its incitement; the rustle of a silken gown, the glare of painted cheeks, the intoxication of shed essences; others there are that will be frightened off and disgusted by them; be sure for each the serpent hath his proper lure. Poor fallen, disreputable humanity, in what abode or office of you lurketh not iniquity! Rather, are ye not all sin, eyes to be plucked out, hands to be dis-severed, that in the end, maimed and blind and bleeding, ye may stumble into paradise and save the soul of you alive?

Once more, and once more only, as I stood upon the threshold which I had oft-times passed so blithely, outside the door I had unlatched a score of times in a day, forbidden me now, by all the thunder of Sinai, I say once more conscience spoke at my ear, but now so abated from her former haughty intonation, liker unto the voice of one that hath cried in vain for help through a whole night and perishes unheard in the

darkness, that I was nearer I believe to have turned away then and snatched my soul from the fire, than at any other period of my struggle.

"Forbear! forbear!" she sobbed, "if ye will not from love of God—from love of your own soul, think of the woman that is to share your guilt! Have mercy and spare her! Oh! ye are wise Richard Fitzsimon, ye are deadly wise; well you know the way back to God, and though 't were paved with fire to return to Him as 't was strewn with flowers to lead you from Him, your feet will have strength and cunning to tread it until the end. But when she be fallen, who shall raise her up, when she hath strayed, whence shall come light to guide her back?"

This was a conception so sharp and strange to me, a reinforcement to my misgivings so little looked for, that I plucked back my hand from the latch as though indeed it had scorched me, and put it in my bosom. How came it, I wonder, that amid all my misgivings until now, this idea of an equal responsibility and peril to the woman whom in my own crazy fashion I loved tenderly, waited until the last supreme moment to recur to me? Alas, I fear 't is the truth of all men, the wisest, in the pursuit of this pleasure, nay, of all, the most penitent, in the working out of its expiation, the woman standeth for little besides, first, a quarry to be hunted down, afterward a memory to be effaced. 'T is the misfortunate property of this sin even where it does not harden the heart, to sully and obscure the memory. Of all the Augustines that turn to God, how many, remember in the day of regeneration the mothers of their Adeodati, and while they wash their own garments, think that every stain upon them is the life blood of some soul precious to God as their own?

Conscience, be sure, was not slack to follow up this halt and discomfiture.

"Be a man," it urged me. "Commit your love from this hour to God. Refine and chasten it in the furnace of self-sacrifice. Not until then will it be an offering acceptable in His eyes. Who knoweth but He may yet in His infinite mercy and power, find a way for you both to walk before His face, sinless and loving. Is His arm shortened to save? Go back to your own house, 't is now too late for you to seek the Indian, but wait you there. Presently your mistress will come over to seek you; then fall at her feet, abase yourself. Leave it to Him to find words that shall reach her heart."

"No," says I, hardening my own anew, "when you speak to me of myself, then 't is well, then I listen to you, but you know not my mistress as I know her. I tell you, 't were easier for me to meet a lioness robbed of her whelps than this woman after I had put such an affront on her. As to speaking to her of God, of my scruples, 't is a language she understands not at all. Have I not already tried it and had confusion for my portion," and I put back my hand again to the latch.

"So be it," says conscience. "God hath tried every way with you, and He will save no man in his own despite. Only, be not deceived! now is the acceptable time; now the hour of salvation or damnation; now tips the beam for you one way or t' other."

"I have not sinned yet," says I, shrinking aghast, at such a terrible voice; "I have not sinned yet. To unlatch a door is a little thing."

"A little thing," says conscience, "a little thing to remember for all eternity; a little worm never to die

but to writhe at your heart so long as God's justice shall endure. That you stood this one night of your life, a free man; knowing both good and evil, not amazed nor perplexed, the two roads plain before you; salvation near by your hand for you to take hold of if you would; on the other side such a latch to unfasten, such a door to open, forbid you by God, and 't was that you chose, as an ox goeth to the shambles, or a fool to correction; as a bird into the snare, and knew not that 't was for your own life."

I undid the fastening, and entered the house.

CHAPTER XVI

I HAD no sooner closed the door behind me than the clamour at my heart ceased all of a sudden, like a man coming into a house out of a storm.

My mistress was alone; she sate in the inglenook under a swinging lamp, and had some sewing in her hand — the dog was stretched at her feet, his nose between his paws, and blinked at me as I came in, with friendly eyes. I thought her still pale and her eyes a little dim, perhaps from her needlework; she was dressed in the green satin gown that she had worn the night of our woodland ride and had lace over her bosom. Her hair was rolled over a pillow with a cap of Flemish work, and great gold earrings. I had rather she had worn her dress of homespun, but women will never be persuaded men love them not better bedecked, and indeed she looked beautiful enough to have been a world's desire. I must have been late, but she did not chide me, only rose to her feet when I came in, and fastened the door behind me. I stood in the middle of the kitchen, awkwardly, as one that had been there before only on set errands, and now felt his empty hands irksome. She bade me sit down, and I would have taken the bench opposite to her, but she made room for me at her side, drawing her skirts, which were very voluminous, to one hand.

"Are ye hungry?" she said after a little space of silence, taking up her sewing again, "you scarce ate at supper."

I told her rather breathlessly I could not eat.

"Well," said she, "there is wine on the table at your hand, when you have a mind to it."

I poured some out for us both. The glasses and flask were gilded and shaped very fantastically, of that Flemish glass which does not ring when it is struck, as I had occasion to note, for my hand, as I poured, shook like a leaf.

"You do not praise my array, Diccon," says she presently, pouting, "what think you of me, thus attired?"

"You are terrible in my eyes," said I, warming to her, perhaps with the draught, "terrible as an army with banners."

She was pleased at the conceit, and leaning over, kissed me for the first time since I had entered.

"Faint-hearted knight," said she, "why should they affright you? The blazons are all of your heraldry."

"'T is a poor torn escutcheon," said I, "conquered, defaced, and trampled underfoot. Ye are too proud and too lovely, Madam Agnes, to wear losing colours."

"Let be the defacement," said she, "I know well it hath never been defiled. Oh sweetheart," says she, joining her hands behind my neck, "you are such a gentleman, I would almost ye were less so. You kiss my hand and my skirt when you might have my lips, you sue for favour still, when all has been granted you. Why are you so gentle and lowly, Richard?"

If I had told her then what an hair shirt to the pride of life is knowledge of God, would she have understood me? No, no; I can see now the stare of incomprehension that would have answered me in her eyes. 'T is a bold thing to say at this day, yet do I believe it true, through all my follies and infatuations, that

instinct which kept me from speaking of God to her was a right one, not to be overborne, though like Jacob it seemed at times an angel wrestled with it.

Instead, I tried to tell her something of a nature to which the restraints and hesitancies of love were its sweetest part.

"Remember your own saying," I told her, "'the bull and the lion know most of love,' would you have me like them?"

She knitted her brows a little and looked up at the light.

"I would have you as God made you, Richard," said she at length, "and as I have seen you once or twice. But it seemeth to me there is some fault in you that will seldom let you be your true self. This hath oftentimes puzzled and troubled me."

"I know," says I bitterly, for her words reached to the quick; "I know well there is little in me to love, but may not a man be loved sometimes in spite of what he lacks as well as for what he hath?"

"I do love you, heart!" said she, "I do love you," giving me at the same time a very warm proof; "if I did not, think you that I would grieve so at your faults?"

After a little more silence she spoke again.

"I am about to ask you a plain question, Diccon, will ye promise me a plain answer?"

I told her I would speak the truth.

"Am I, then, the first woman whose lover ye have been?"

"The very first," said I, forgetting vanity.

"'T is strange," she said, looking me over, "you are far from ill looking, Richard, or ill mannered. Hath no woman ever sought to be your mistress, high nor low?"

If she had asked me this two months before, I should still have answered her plainly, "no," but in the light of my new and sorry knowledge, many an incident of my old life recurred to me with a new meaning. For all my wariness, I had been doubly armed in those days, with simplicity as well as subtlety, imagining evil everywhere and not seeing it when 't was under my nose. Never mind how I answered; 't was according to this late illumination.

"Why did you give none of them their way, Diccon?" she asked.

"Because I loved them not," says I, lying.

"As you love me," she urged.

"As I love you, madam," I answered.

We put our lips together and kept them there some moments as though our very souls would meet in that sweet conjunction. Alas, those whom God hath put asunder, that such trivialities should seek to join!

"Come," said she, when they were parted, making as if to rise, "the day is long to talk."

At these words such a terrible rigour seized upon me, with shivering and chattering of teeth, I could no longer conceal it from her, but shook in her arms like an aspen.

"Are you faint, Diccon?" she asked, sharp and anxious.

I nodded my head, and she reached to the table for the glass of wine which I had poured out for her.

"Not that," says I, between my teeth, "give me the other," and I pointed toward the flask of spirit, which she had brought in from Shubaal.

I took a long draught of the rum; the liquor scorched my throat though it did not warm my body. Yet I must suppose it loosened my tongue.

"Sit down," said I, and she resumed her seat, staring upon me with astonished eyes.

I fell on the floor, upon my knees, at her feet and buried my face in her lap.

"Listen," says I hoarsely, "you must learn all about me at last. I can keep it no longer shut in my bosom."

"Tell it another time, Richard," said she, soothing me, "to-night you are not yourself."

"Yes, yes," says I; "I am myself. My own wretched, cowardly self; you see me at last with all my disguises plucked off. I am a craven. I am in deadly fear now. You must let me go."

"Of what are you fearful, Richard," she asks me as one would reason with a child, "we two are as much alone to-night as though there were none besides ourselves on God's earth."

I asked her, collecting myself a little, did she remember the night of our ride home from the Chapin house.

"To be sure," said she, "that night you were a man, be one now!"

"I am done with acting," says I. "You remember when the horse's feet came up behind us and I put you on the pillion again, what an hardship I made of the interruption. 'T was all a lie; I was glad, and blessed God who had sent His angel at our backs."

"His angel," she repeated scornfully, "what would one be doing there; 't was a villager who turned back afterward."

"Man, angel, or devil," cried I, "'t is all one now; afterwards when we came out of the trees, I made as though I would put you off again."

"I remember," said she, biting her lip, "and I would not."

"Well," said I, "nothing did I dread so much as that you might have taken me at my word. Had you done so, I must have told you then all I am telling to-night; and by so much have forestalled your scorn. When we got home and I saw you into the house, had you looked out of window you might have seen me fall on my knees, thanking God for His mercy to me. 'T was the same in the orchard, the night we thought your father gone to bed and I was so foolish and so vile; when he came to the door and called you in, there was an oath on my lips but deliverance at my heart. Nay even when we said our good bye last night, or last week, or last year; which was it? although within your arms I poured out reproaches and entreaties upon you for leaving me, no sooner had you loosed me than again I saw the hand of God, and was so troubled at your promise about the candle that when I had watched a while and saw nothing of it, I slept the sounder that I knew we were to part. And why," says I, "did ye not put it there, since you were to stay?"

"My father would decide nothing till morning," she answered, "but what matter? Is this your story? and why, if I may ask, this great continuing jubilee of thanksgiving on your part at all the rubs in our courtship?"

"Because," says I, like a culprit who himself must give the word for a platoon to fire, "because it kept us apart; we never knew each other."

"Is this true," said she, almost to herself, striving to turn my face up, but I kept it down. "Can it be true? If so then Richard Fitzsimon, you are the sorriest, lying, pitiful fribbler that ever cozened a woman. How dared you, how dared you," her voice rising, "cheat me out of a promise to stay behind,

with your Jesuit artifices and inflated speeches, and then come to me, when I make you a rendezvous, with this story. Get up, sir," says she, "do not sprawl at my knees; you do not cut a pretty figure, I assure ye. What do you want? I have no hocus pocus of absolution to give you. Get hence quickly. I will never speak to you nor see you more. I hate you from my heart."

I seized her hands and would not suffer her to rise, covering them and her knees with kisses. I had one glance too at her face, but quickly took my eyes away. It was become hideous, red, and distorted with anger, her brows bended like a witch's, her nostrils dilated and quivering.

"Have mercy on me," I wailed, "have mercy on me. Oh! if you could see into my heart to know in what fire of hell it hath seethed all day for your sake, through what a furnace of pitch I have waded now to come at your arms, you would not doubt my love for you, nor be so impatient with me."

The terrible strain of my conflict found relief at last, and a vent in tears. I wept unrestrainedly. She sate still and left me her hands, neither responding nor seeking to check me.

"Oh!" cried I, "never look upon me again as you looked just now. 'T will turn my heart to stone; indeed it will," and I wept on.

"Cease, cease," says she at last, bending over me, "my anger is over. Come! look up! Am I a monster that you keep your head hidden?"

"Will you listen to me?" cries I.

"I will listen patiently," says she, tapping the floor with her foot, "to whatever you have to say, only — you must not shout so, good man. There never was

one like you, Richard, to rave. We shall be having the black wenches down presently, thinking there is murder afoot and wondering to find the other commandment being infracted with such a clatter."

"You know," says I as soon as I could speak collectedly, "that I was educated at a seminary — a college for priests."

"To my sorrow," says she.

"But have you any idea, madam, what such a place is like?"

"None whatever," she answered drily, "nor am I tempted to speculate."

"Well, then," says I, "I must instruct you. 'T is a place of trial for the most earnest, but for the unstable, of torture inexpressible; wherein men go to slay their passions, and though there lack not wise doctors to prescribe the quickest way, 't is as with men in prison, I think, some die easy and some die hard, but of all means that which in the beginning is most usual is — fear . . ."

"Fear of what?" says she, "of bogeys?—of the birch?"

"Oh," says I, "of everything. Of hell, of God's judgments, of our passions, of our affections, of ourselves. 'T is made to walk by our sides, to sit at our table, to crouch by our pillow. I say not that 't is ill done so to ground us; saith the Bible: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," I know if I had persevered I should have grown in time to understand His love, His tenderness, His providence, as well. Perhaps I left too soon and am like a child that hath learnt half his lesson."

"But, Richard," she said, "you left this place young. you had sense enough to extricate yourself from their toils in time."

"Yes," says I, "but God knoweth how much of my manhood I left behind there. I am like a man that hath suffered one half of a martyrdom; going maimed about the world, and better to have gone through with it, and gained his crown."

"And to think," says she, "that you were on your way back there when they captured you! Indeed, Diccon, were I you, I would consider those troopers of Oliver's my very good friends."

"What good," says I, "am I in the world with a maimed, broken spirit. Were it not for you, I would gladly be back to-night, for 't is the only place I shall ever be at ease in again."

"It seems 't is I, then, who have sweetened this wicked world for you, Diccon?" she said, stroking my hair.

"Oh, yes, madam," said I, laying my cheek fondly to hers, "you know not how much. In those early days when you would come out to feed the chickens, and stand in the sun with your hair blown about your eyes, how often I have stopped my work to watch you. 'T would be an idle task for me to explain it you, but, looking on you, all those old conceptions seemed like filthy dreams of night recalled at noon-day."

"Tell me more," she says, pinching my cheek, "I can understand you well enow. I am no kitchen wench to gape at your wisdom. You had seen many women before, now wherein was I different?"

"I think in this wise, madam. All I had hitherto taken note of were courtesans who marketed their womanhood, or ladies of fashion that carried it as a weapon, or religious women that stifled it under coifs and habits, or homespun household drudges. You

alone of all I have been familiar with, bore it both nobly and naturally, neither immodest nor shame-faced. Had you been the one, I should quickly have fled from you; or the other, I should have caught the infection and been backward and tongue-tied in my turn. You think me mean spirited, nay! do not deny it," as she would have spoken, and indeed struck me playfully; "in a hundred ways I have seen your thought. Yet believe me this, kind as your father hath been to me, I should long since have fled to the forests from this menial work to which I am set, but that you shared it with me. It hath seemed so sweet and natural a thing to be the pensioner of your bounty; if my employment was incongruous with my birth, yours was no less. I knew you were a gentlewoman, of blood like mine own, so betwixt us two it seemed to me a truce might well be declared; and neither I be ashamed to take your orders, nor you reluctant to give them me. Often and often Madam Agnes, before you took note of me at all, I have watched you at your work and said within my heart; 'Oh, if there be peace for me anywhere on earth, 't would be within this woman's arms.'"

"But, Richard," says my mistress smiling, "there is nothing fearful in all this. When did these terrible conflicts begin within you that you speak of?"

"You remember a certain day," says I, "when I was cutting stakes near the river and you came down and spoke to me. You have forbidden me to remind you of it, I know."

"No matter," says she, "to-night I care not at all."

"Well," says I, "I think 't was from that day I loved you, and since to love you was to desire you, for I am only human, and though at first I made no

great harm of it, yet my conscience was aroused, and from that time to this there hath not been an hour of the day, and oh, how many of the night, that I have not struggled with God for you. You wondered to see me grow so pale and thin, you never guessed the long lonely night hours I have passed; not daring to sleep; my conscience offering an opiate to my lips, if I would but surrender you, and put you out of my heart. You cannot understand this temper, can you, Madam Agnes?"

"Of a truth," says my mistress, "I believed beds were made to be slept in, Diccon."

"At least," said I, "you will not marvel any longer, that sometimes I was heavy eyed and maladroit, and would drop things from my hand."

"Heart," said she, "ye think me too harsh. You might have broken every dish and platter in my house so it gave you a night's rest. But do not stop, Diccon. Were there any other terrors? Was there also some thing that walked by day to plague your poor bosom?"

"Once," says I, "I took a cramp in swimming up where the trader drowned himself, and nearly went to join him. All the time I was floundering, a voice kept crying; 'Give up Mrs. Agnes, think no more of her or ye are lost, body and soul!' But I would not give you up though I went under twice . . ."

She clutched my shoulder. "Have I not forbid you to go swimming in that treacherous river, whose depths and currents no man knows. Do ye go there any more?"

"Indeed, indeed," said I, "I do not, because I am afraid; oh, how you must despise me now, knowing all my cowardice."

"Despise you," she repeated, pressing her cheek to mine, "not a whit, poor lad. I think I never loved you till now. I will help you fight these beastly terrors that were conveyed into your head before you knew good from evil, and love shall cast out your devil. I am a soldier's daughter who fought all his youth against these mean tyrants, 't is in my very blood to fight them too. Since my poor favours can lighten your heart, you shall have them, if 't is true you find peace in my arms, there, from this hour your home and fortress shall be."

She put my head on her bosom. I let it lie there; my passion was over and I utterly spent; only now and then a sob I could not suppress rose, as 't were from the depths of my being and ended in an hysterical laugh, when she would lay her hand on my lips to silence it.

"Are you calm now?" she asked me after a while.

I told her, yes, feeling not only at peace but a little drowsy. I had not closed my eyes for nigh on twenty-four hours, and the day had been full of labour and anguish; sufficient evil in it for a year.

"And are the terrors all fled?"

"There is nothing now," I told her, "in my body or soul but love of you and desire for you."

"If I loose you and leave you for a few moments, will they come rushing back upon you to drive you out into the forest?"

"Have no fear," said I, myself rising and disengaging her arms, "the battle is over."

"And won," said she, standing, proud and erect in her beauty.

"Or lost," said I with a wan smile, "all is one so you love me."

She pulled down the lamp and extinguished it, then drew the curtain from across the window, letting in the moonlight to the room. The moon was very low, nearly behind the hills; the Indian, as I remembered with a sudden constriction of the heart, on his way back an hour.

It was very still in the room when she had gone; naught to hear save the tick of a great clock, the shifting of the ashes as they cooled in the grate, the snoring of the hound; and the sound of my own heart, beating hollower and hollower, like footsteps that pass down a vaulted stairway into the bowels of the earth; that which leadeth from the house of death, going down unto the gate of hell.

CHAPTER XVII

IT MAY have been two hours later, maybe more, for the sun in this hemisphere, even in the summer solstice, rises not before five in the morning; the world still dark then, that Mrs. Agnes raised herself upon her elbow, and said in a terrible voice: "There is one coming up the path to the house! hark to the dog!"

Instantly there was alarm and disorder as in a camp surprised by a camisado. There was a night-light burning in the room, and as I groped for my shoes by its feeble glimmer, I could see my mistress coiling up her hair upon her head.

"Why do you dress your head," said I, "it must appear you were surprised sleeping."

"And you by me!" she exclaimed. "Do not sit on the couch staring at me and telling me what is to do. 'T is you must be conveyed away."

"I will slip out the front door," I told her.

"And into whose arms?" she retorted, "do you think if this be a surprise both doors are not watched? What a general was lost in you! Have you your shoes on? Is aught of yours in the room?"

My brain was so muddled and bemused, for she had roused me from unfathomable depths of sleep, such as innocence never knew, that I could not answer her collectedly, no more than a man just come to the surface of the sea, with all his senses steeped in its watery element. The dog continued to snatch and whine, but I could hear nothing yet of the sound

which had roused him; there was that, however, on my mistress's face which forebade questioning. Even as I spoke she had thrust me into the arm-closet behind the curtain, flinging in my hat after me, which I had left upon the settle. The kitchen was dark, but enough of light for me to see her standing by the door, her hand upon the collar of the bristling watchdog, woman and beast in such a strained posture of anxiety as, cast in bronze or hewn in marble, might stand its representation for all ages.

"You are deceived," says I, presently, from behind the curtain, "'t is one of the noises of the night."

She made a passionate gesture of silence with her free arm, and went on listening. Suddenly the dog flung up his nose and uttered a most dismal and prolonged howl; when it had ceased I also could hear feet dragged along the gravel path that led through the orchard; slow and halting, as of one that fears an ambuscade at every step, but surely coming toward the house. My blood froze at this stealthy, unseasonable approach. I put my hand behind my back and catching a sword hilt, pulled the weapon from its sheath, the muscles knitting themselves along my arm as my fingers gripped the pommel. My mistress turned at the fall of the scabbard and saw me coming out from the closet with the naked sword in my hand.

"In Jesu's name!" said she, "why are you out of the closet? Are we to have murder here too?"

"Get you back into your chamber," said I, "I will open the door."

The feet came upon us as I spoke, and were already sounding hollow on the boarded steps that led to the porch. Had they come less directly to the door, I should have believed them, from the manner of the

sound, rather the motions of a clumsy wild beast, such as a bear or great wolf. 'T is not an easy thing, I know, to convey into any words the horror of this interruption, considered the hour, the conjunction of circumstances, the deliberateness of the approach, and the necessity, above all, to wait for some summons before the door might be opened. There was something of rage and exasperation in my own heart even above my fears.

"Get back into your chamber," I told my mistress again, "and loose the dog. I will open the door; and if 't is death, you shall see how dear a life can be sold."

She turned on me, I fancy to strike me, but seeing my crouched body, with the sword held at point, my mouth twisted into a grin with fright and rage, and my bristling hair, which I could feel rising on my scalp, all I make no doubt, a sufficiently horrible picture in the wan light from the inner chamber, at sight of these things it seems her courage forsook her, and taking first a great knife off the table, she comes over to me, and laid her arms along my neck, very faint and womanly.

"Diccon," says she, "Diccon, will ye listen to your mistress once, before you destroy us both?"

"Go on," says I, my eyes upon the door at which the hound was scratching desperately, "what would you say?"

"Only this," says she in a plaintive voice, pitiful as the cry of a lost child in a vault, "if you will not into the closet and put the sword from your hand, I will thrust this," shewing the knife, "into my heart, and then who wills may open the door."

I took the knife from her hand, and went back into

the armoury. She still stood by the door ready to answer, but shaking now, and with her hands at her bosom.

"Pray God it be not my father!" I thought I heard her say, or else, "Oh God! if it should be my father!"

"If it be your father," said I, "I will not raise a hand; let him kill me."

"Be sure he will kill you," she said, "but me the first!"

There was a cough from outside, low down, as from one that was striving to peer under the door and had got dust in his mouth. Then whoever 't was lay there, got to his feet scrambling, tried the latch, and finding it fast, knocked upon the panels, not strongly nor loudly, but with an insistence as of one that would not be denied.

"Not yet! not yet!" I whispered, for I thought she went to open the door. "It must seem you were awakened."

"Do you lie close," said my mistress, "I know well what is to do!"

She went softly into the inner chamber, called the dog in to her, shut the door quickly on him, and came back with the taper in her hand.

"Who knocks," said she aloud, in a voice as steady as could be looked for.

There was a strange disorderly answer as of one seeking to speak with his tongue cut out of his throat.

"I cannot open till I know who you are," repeats my mistress, her voice shaking, "the folk are all abed, the master away; 't is no hour to be asking admittance."

The gabble begins again, urgent but unintelligible like a peal of bells clashed all together for an alarm. The dog too was making a terrible clatter in the inner room.

"Open quickly," I said, "and get behind the door; if 't is an enemy I can then confront him. If 't is any we know, I swear to you I will not stir."

She drew the bolt and opened back the door. Even as the hinges turned, the form of a man staggered into the room, stood erect a moment, and crashed forward on to the floor. It was the old house servant, Calamy, but with a face so distorted, unearthly and livid, such bulging eyes, and such a mane of bristly hair, he was a sight to me infinitely more terrible than ten hostile strangers. His filthy flannel bed gown was all torn and muddied about his knees from crawling to the house, and scarce covered his nakedness. Whatever his efforts to reach us, and I think they must have been very terrible and long continued, his strength was now quite consumed, and he lay prone on the ground where he had fallen, beating it with his elbows and knees in a vain attempt to rise, like a seal upon the ice, and scratching the boards with his long nails. Fearful as was the sight, it seems 't was a relief to Mrs. Agnes's private fears. Instead of fainting as one would have looked for, she throws her arms round my neck saying in a sobbing voice:

"Thank God! thank God! 't is nothing worse. Oh! if ye knew what I foreboded."

"My death is on me," says Shubaal in his throat, rearing his head as a snake does when its back is broken, "will ye leave me die alone like a dog?"

I got from my mistress's arms and raised him up. He was wasted, but heavy as though his bones were turned of iron.

"Shall I take him to the house," says I, but she bade me carry him in to her father's chamber. All her courage and wit returned to this woman in a

moment, as quick as the blood back to her cheeks. She lighted the lamp, and finished her dressing while I carried in the old pirate and laid him on the tumbled bed. When I returned to the kitchen she was already on her knees blowing the fire.

"Had I not better ride and fetch Mr. Chapin?" says I, wishful to shew I too could be of use in this emergency.

She stopped her work and turned on me with that old gesture of despair which more than anything else, abased me in my own eyes.

"Truly," said she, "I see that you are past mending, and must stay as you are until you die."

"Wherein find you fault with me now," said I, fretfully.

"Because," said she, as the fire crackled in the hearth, "in face of this intolerable accident, you will still be thinking: 'To whom can I apply myself now? whose strength use to buttress my weakness?' instead of thinking for yourself and acting for yourself. I am never done wondering, Richard, how you ever came thus far through your perils."

Alas! for that hand she knew not of, that had sustained me, and now shaken off by my own rebellion, with threatening finger pointed at me, said only, "Depart from me, accursed!" and alas! too, for the swiftness and incontinence wherewith this first of my punishment followed on the heel of transgression. Oh! if I had believed aught, I had believed this, that after such a consummation of love as still my blood raced with, in my regard at least this woman would put off her harshness and imperious carriage, that once admitted to the sanctuary of her heart, no matter by what miry roads I was forced to seek it,

there would come an end forever to me, of that cloud of humours that veiled her to others. 'T was this confident faith that had been my supreme temptation, potent infinitely beyond all stings of passion or vanity, this the weight, that, thrown into the scale at the end, had upborne all my fears and regrets. Behold it now, chaff and straw in my hand.

I was weak enough to bandy reproaches with her.

"You know I am a coward," said I, "since I have hid nothing from you, not even that; but, 't is early to cast it back in my face."

"No! no! Richard," said she, "ye are no coward. Were you so, be sure you should not be here to-night. Rather, heart! you are of all men by turns the most despondent and the most desperate ever I saw. From you that sane middle way wherein safety is to be sought seemeth ever hidden. 'T is strange. You would throw yourself with your sword and pistols at an army, but cast into the water, I believe you would drown rather than look for a spar to catch hold on."

I answered her not; reasonable or unreasonable I saw I must henceforth approve all this woman said. From me she never would endure contradiction. This is what Solomon would say, he who had such an experience of them, when he writeth: "By means of them (women) a man is brought to a bit of bread," that is, not, as some would construe it, to beg his bread, but unto a piece of dough itself, that can be kneaded this shape or that at their humour.

Presently I said:

"Your father himself bade me send for Chapin, if we were in any trouble."

"Yes," says she, "but I am scarce to think he foresaw the trouble of our being surprised together.

What want we Chapin for, this morning, with his cross-questions and suspicions?"

"Have your way," said I, "God knoweth you are wiser than I."

She kissed me for this, for women are ever flattered by authority, finding no burden therein, until all has gone astray; and we went into the bedroom to look at Calamy.

"He must be bled," said she, knitting her brows, when she had examined his back, which was a terrible sight, "did ye ever bleed a man, Diccon?"

"Never to his healing," said I, laughing, for I could not help it.

She stamped her foot.

"Oh! grow not witty now, at the wrong time; the man must be bled or die!"

She began to roll up her sleeves, looking at me rather ruefully.

"I see I must be the leech," said she, "go over to the press against the wall and pull open the doors at the top."

"They are locked," says I, trying them.

"Then force them," said she.

I got a knife and slipped back the hasp. There was a great array of bottles and herb bundles, with an acrid fume of drugs. Here, I thought, was a brave armoury with which to fight mortal ills, or frighten them off, but to us unskilled people, about as much use as a shoe to a goose.

"Is there a case there," she asked me, "of leather; with lancets."

I told her I could see no such thing.

"Nor a cupping glass."

"Bottles in plenty, madam," says I, "but no glass."

"You are a good seeker, Dicky, but an ill finder," said she, coming over to the cupboard. As she peered into its recess, our cheeks were very close together, and in such a sudden renewal of fervour as any young husband may approve, I kissed her passionately.

"Let be," said she sharply, "and take your head from the light; there is not room for both here. There are occasions for all things, be content to attend them."

Presently she found the cupping glass, and in default of a lancet sent me into the kitchen to choose a cutler's knife, with which she opened Calamy's back in three places along the spinal or vertebrate column, and I having warmed the glass at her direction, we took from the old man about three to four ounces of blood, to his very great easing, as soon was manifest, for he quite ceased the groanings and spasms that were so fearful a thing to hear and see, and began to talk, tho' not collectedly, yet plainly to be understood.

None ever appeareth to better advantage than when engaged upon some such act of mercy, and as I watched my mistress, how deftly and hardily she did her work, neither fainting at the sight of blood, as might well be excused upon a woman's natural frailty; nor losing patience at his shifting and unreasonable clamour under the imposthume, which was an operation, I should say, infinitely less painful to endure than to witness, my heart was filled with a great admiration at this woman's mettle, and such an exaltation got hold of me to think how she had given herself to me who was so capable and unyielding a spirit, I said to myself, I would not exchange her love, capricious as 't is, for the most passionate, assured devotion of all kind and buxom women in this world. Being brought,

then, again into this docile temper, I poured water or wrung out the cloths, at her bidding, and did not again incur reproach, heavy and clogged with sleep as were my brain and limbs.

I have said the bleeding brought Calamy back again to his speech, but to his senses it seemed he was never like to come again in this world, and a terrible thing 't was to hear him, how now, with the restraint of his will taken off by his disorder, the old fashions of sin which he had worn so many years, returned upon him; terrible more especially to me, for I had had much converse with him of which nothing hath been said, and saw no reason, for all his errors and invincible ignorance of truth, to doubt that this was a man sincerely compunctious of his old life; even so, so true it is that confession of our crimes is less a thing enjoined us by religious precept, than a relief demanded by our nature, behold this man, who all his days, as he failed not to let me know, had despised our way of confession beyond all others of our doctrines, befouling it with slanders and scandals no less than refuting its divine institution by such texts as he had ever ready, like a fusileer his bullet in his mouth; behold him now I pray, reduced by sickness and fear unto natural instincts, unloading his inflamed bosom of its poisonous secrets upon us, in default of worthier, who had neither power to discharge him, nor, God knoweth, the right to reprove him. But indeed, 't is only by favour to his regeneration, such as 't was, I can call this a confession at all, for in his motions and language there was little of sorrow to be observed, rather the transition out of oaths and boastfulness into the furthest extremities of despair. in the first of which he would roll out such pirate choruses and saltwater blasphemies as I trembled

to hear; in the second, would be overwhelmed by torrents and gulfs of desperation wherein, all the blood he had shed was a tide creeping up to cover his mouth and eyes; the women he had deflowered, harpies to tear him apieces, the plunder he had taken, an horrible weight on his body to sink him the surer.

Yet I could not, oh! I could not stand by this poor sinner in the hour of his extremity, and give him no good cheer out of all that had been instilled into me. Be sure the devil told me, o'er and again that upon my lips such things were blasphemy now, without worth either to myself or him I would seek to comfort, but says I to myself:

"Why Richard! even tho' ye have sinned, are God's mercies therefore made void? Did not Dives in the very folds of the serpent, think of his friend in peril, and will you have less bowels than the damned?"

Therefore kneeling down by the sick man's side, I loosened his fingers which had fastened upon my arm, and began to say the Lord's Prayer very slow in his ear.

"Will you not kneel too?" says I to my mistress, seeing she ceased tending him.

She shook her head, and stood gazing upon me, but whether her eyes were hard or soft, I knew not, for I did not dare to meet them.

Calamy lay a little calmer at the end of the prayer. It matters not upon what lips 't is heard, that echo of our Saviour's voice still hath power to cast out devils.

"Old friend," says I, seeing him quieted, "how is it with you?"

" 'T is all over," says he, looking from one to the other of us, "there is no salvation for me: none hath ever sinned as I have sinned."

"Nay, nay, poor man," says I, "that you must not think; why, though your sins were as the sands of the sea, or the hairs upon your head, think you one drop of our Saviour's blood is not enough to cancel them?"

Calamy (shaking me by the arm), "Who is it speaking thus to me?"

"It is Simon," I told him, "your old bedfellow, that hath read and prayed with you many's the time."

"Simon," he repeats, knitting his brows, "ah, ah, I remember Simon; a kind lad; he would sit by me many's the night: there never was one like him to have the good word on his lips—but lust in his heart, my masters, lust in 's heart. What! did they think me a blind man that saw naught? She is not guiltless; she took him by the eyes, by the girdle she caught him; but there's measure in wickedness, I say; 't was badly done of them not to wait twelve hours ere he went to her, and to leave me alone, that was never intended surely, so there was no help, I must go down into the pit; and shall I tell ye the manner of it, Simon? Why then 't is naught but a great black fisherman as high as three houses with a lobster spike in his hand, and under the rocks where they are hiding he sticketh it into them, so they are drawn forth writhing upon the pike, and paddle at the air, shrieking like mandrakes; but the others when he hath caught one, they make no sound nor stir, only lie closer under the rocks; but their eyes, sir, their eyes are terrible, they stick out a foot from their heads."

"Shubaal! Shubaal!" says I after a torrent of such talk, unable longer to be a witness of his remorse,

which was like seeing a man drown in a dock under one's feet, "why revile you thus your Redeemer, like impenitent Gesmas, turning away your head whence by one word his partner got salvation? Can ye not think only of Christ hanging upon the cross, and you by his side? 'Tis only to say the words 'Master remember me,' and he will take upon him all your robberies, all your sacrileges, all the blood you have shed."

"Who speaks of the blood I have shed?" he asks, rolling round his eyes at me. "What! ye damned papist, ye Jesuit spider, I foresaw you would creep near me at the end to tempt me. But 't is now too late," says he, all the terror changed to exaltation in a moment. "I am confirmed, and sealed; yea, in the very blood I shed I am sealed, because I kept the covenant and spared not his enemies, man, woman, nor child, but smote them with the sword's edge, and their priests that worked abominations, and cut down their groves of idols. Take her away!" he screams suddenly, pointing to Mrs. Agnes, "take away the nun, Simon! keep her from me; for the love of God, hold her back!"

He clung to me in such a frantic terror, catching me round the neck, that I could not disengage myself.

"There is no nun," said I, soothingly, but my voice shook, "only your kind mistress that will help you if ye but lie still."

"Mistress," says he, "I have no mistress. 'T is the nun at Tortuga, that bit her tongue and spat blood in my face. Off you baggage," he screams, motioning furiously, "I want none such bloody kisses."

"Is she gone?" he whispers presently, keeping his face hid in my breast.

I motioned my mistress to stand behind his head, and told him she was gone.

"Do you know why she waits for me, Simon," says he, very cunning and private, "'t is because this one is to be my wife. There's a brave wife with a lame tongue," he roars, out laughing, "here's what all the world's a seeking:

"Oh! the sluts of hell
They love a man well
Their skins are as black as charcoal,"

and the like.

"How can ye laugh at this poor man?" says I, to my mistress, "here is rather matter for tears, I think."

"Your sermons do no better," said she, "since the man knoweth neither what you say nor what he saith himself."

"It matters not," I told her, "so long as the soul is in the body, so long is there hope. Nay, shall I tell you what Palmieri holds?"

"I care not what he holds," said she, beginning to sponge Calamy again, "do you hold the basin nearer him or the bed will be over blood."

Calamy (sings):

The sea shall dry
The fish shall die
The bee forsake his comb;
Ere I to thee
Unfaithful be,
Then kiss your Jacky come home.

"Ah! poor wretch!" thinks I, looking upon him, "what sweet lass was it taught ye this among your Devonshire lanes? Must you too be tempted ere ye fell? Was the way of sin hard also to you at the

first? Nay, rather I think you were to it as tow unto fire; one that considered not in his heart; that stood up and wiped his mouth, saying, 'T is nothing."

Calamy, I think had been an handsome youth. There were some relics of a former beauty still upon the face through which the skull was beginning to thrust itself, as tho' impatient at death's tardiness. I think women had wept for him, as well as through him; a mother mayhap had shed tears as he sewed at his sea kit; God knoweth, there may have been some ancient woman still, none of his wives, sitting opposite her man in the inglenook, that thought of Calamy when the wind blew roughly and the sea roared. Small wonder there shall neither be marrying nor giving in marriage with God, who knoweth where the heart is given, and where the hand.'

I had softened towards Calamy at an ill moment. Not long after, the bleeding being done, my mistress bade me come with her into the kitchen, so as to be out of the sick man's ear, and filled me a glass of wine.

"You must be a-weary, Richard," said she, "this was a sad unrehearsed ending to our first meeting, and I misdoubt will breed a distaste in you for me, since men hate such rubs and accidents beyond all things."

I faltered out some words, I remember not now exactly what they were, as, that I was not like the most of men, and rejoiced to help her bear them.

"Why, madam," says I, "what a poor friend should I be to care only for the pleasure I had of you."

"Nevertheless, Diccon," said she, looking hard at me, "such is the common way of men."

My heart warmed to her, so sad and lonely she appeared, gazing upon me with unrested eyes; indeed,

she never seemed so close to my heart as when weariness or sickness clouded her beauty, or when I came upon her in one of the hundred little accidents dreaded so by women because therein they appear not to advantage. God knows I wish not to offer myself as any model of constancy, nor under the form of a confession which I protest before Him, this whole memoir shall be, else would the quill drop now from my hand, to contrive a panegyric; I own then, 't was rather faintness of heart than robustness of affection that enabled me so blithely to bear things which men have confessed to me since, sow within them the seeds of repulsion and distaste even in the first days of their possession; even now when she had accorded me the utmost favour of women and beggared her pride for my sake, there was ever this sackcloth next my heart; that if fate had found me her in the court, not the kitchen, her beauty not eclipsed in homespun, but apparelled to be the desire of all eyes as of mine, in pearls and satins; her favours competed for and her wit risposted, then thinks I, Richard, looking and longing were like to have been your share. Women guess not the secret chagrins of men, these jealousies that submission disarms not; these desires that possession faileth to satisfy. How should they know thee, oh heart of man! abyss that God alone can fill! No, I say 't was those days upon which my mistress looked her worst, and never did women change like her from day to day, that my love was most confident and most graceful; whereas, fate most perverse! those days, and they were many, where through the beatitude of a supreme and radiant beauty warmed and sweetened her as the sun a peach, these it was my childish jealousies and insatiable longings chose to dull and em-

brute me on, when I would imagine every man I ever had known, ay laugh not! from poor King Charles down, by her side, and Dick Fitzsimon in the shade, biting his nails for diversion.

And I have only known one woman! Dear God! what tortures must they not endure who in defiance of Thy precept make them their quarry and occupation.

Well, well, I looked upon her now very kindly and tenderly, and kissed her gently between the brows, at which I fancied she was pleased, for women esteem these respectful kisses the more after the others, and I think often make embroilments to have the courting done o'er again.

"Silly Diccon," said she, putting my hair off my face, "he would still be my servant then, after I have made him my lover."

"Indeed, madam," says I, "I long to find means to repay all your indulgence."

She knitted her brows for a moment.

"What think you, Richard?" said she, "of the man in the next room?"

"Why," says I briskly, in order to cheer her, "he is now in a distracted condition 't is true, yet that he may soon get back his senses I think there is good hope."

"You fool!" said she, so suddenly and harshly, I flinched as at a blow; "you fool! hope he may get back his senses, say you. Do ye not see that what we must both pray for is that he never recovers them in this world, and quickly uses them in another."

"I know not what you would say," I stammered; but I knew well enough.

"Shall I speak plainer?" says she. "What value,

think you, will my repute have, if that man live till noon to-morrow."

"He saw nothing," I answered weakly; "Calamy saw nothing."

"Saw nothing;" she repeated, mocking me; "and did you hear nothing? One of you is as deaf as the other is blind. If he saw naught, tell me, what mean those words: 'T was ungently done not to wait ten hours before they were together.' Suppose them spoken to-morrow before the boors and preachers that will come flocking round the bed, like flies to a slaughter house. Why," says she, covering her face with her hands, "I may as well fly the settlement at once, with my skirts pulled over my head to hide my blushes."

"The man is delirious," I said, but my mouth turned dry at the danger, "what credit can attach to his words?"

"With our people more than if he were sane," she answered, "you know them not as I know them. A man dying is a man inspired. Every word of his will be preached over, glozed over, and wrangled over until next flood-tide, Mistress Agnes, the papist servant. Oh what food for their tongues is here; could scandal ask better?"

'T was plain to be seen indeed that the woman was desperate; for her foot beat the ground, and she tore a kerchief between her teeth. At seeing her so discomfited, I was quite overwhelmed. I had grown so used by now to obeying her decision in all our little matters, that in this terrible crisis, wherein I saw she looked to me for help, and I experienced naught save a conviction of my impotence to help her, much the same despair got hold of me, as I think

a starved mother feeleth when her infant spurns the drained bosom, wailing for his milk. 'T is a thing very ill done and very oft done by women, to perish away a man's power of decision by its continued usurpation in matters of no moment, and then of a sudden require it of him in some great affair.

"Can ye not bid him be silent?" I asked her at length.

"A gallant suggestion," she sneered, "if he be raving as you say, to what end shall I command him? If he be healthy of mind, so much the worse for me; he is sucking his revenge in his mouth already. You know not, Diccon," says she, beginning to weep, "nor I do I choose to tell you, what grudge this man hath against me. Only be assured of this, sweetheart, as I shall answer before God, ye are deceived in him, and my father too. There lives not so malignant a devil under the sun; sad cause have I to know it."

"After all," said I, "the man may die before morning."

"May die," says she after me through her tears, "did you truly love me he should not live to see the light."

I was sitting at the table again before my wine, and at her words I buried my face upon my arms without one word. I could hear her voice speaking on, but muffled or faint as tho' far off, so that I understood nothing of it, which makes me believe I was indeed for a time in a stupor or faint trance. When I came to myself, she was leaning over me and shaking me by the shoulder.

"Richard," she calls, "Richard, look up! are ye swooned?" and the like.

I looked up into her face; 't was puckered up into the wrinkles of a smile, but her eyes were terrible.

"Silly man!" says she "not to see I was jesting."

I shook her off and got on to my legs.

"No, no!" says I, "you were not jesting."

I caught her again for something to hold by and we swayed together, like two landsmen on a tossing ship, into one another's arms.

"Listen," said I, as though another man spoke. "I will do all your bidding; you shall see whether I love you."

"You must not! you cannot!" she cried in my bosom. "He is an old man."

"I have killed older."

"But — a sick man Richard."

"I shall kill him the easier."

"You have no quarrel with him," she says pleadingly.

Says I: "I shall kill him the cannier."

"Nay," said she, "I would rather face the other. I spoke but in jest, the fault is yours to take such light words in earnest."

I put her arms off me, and flung her into the chair.

"No more words!" I commanded her with a terrible oath. "For love of heaven, no more words upon it; see you not, Agnes, 't is our words that are damning us? All the rest is a little matter beside them," and I began to move forward toward the door that lay into the bed-chamber. I was near to lay my hand upon the latch when my mistress rose and came across the room to me, holding out her hands, for she walked uncertainly.

"Let me come with you, Richard," says she, "I will take my share, too, since ye are bent on it."

I took her by the waist and hand, and led her back to the ingle seat that was farthest from the door.

"Sit you there," said I, with such a look that she shrank back into the corner. "Ye are to sit still there, neither to listen nor think, until I come back and tell you your good name is safe."

"But no noise, Richard," she said, covering her ears already with her hands and putting up her shoulders, "no noise — lest I go mad."

But even as she spoke there comes the noise of a fall from the next room, and of limbs thrashing the floor. Mrs. Agnes shrieked and flew to me, burying her head upon my shoulder; as for me it seemed my heart soared up into my throat like a rocket ready to burst and slay me, as indeed I think had happened, had the door opened by ever so little, a skinny arm or bristling head been protruded, and that terrible old man crept in again upon his murderers, whether to denounce us or seek our company it mattered not.

But there was to be neither sound nor stir from Calamy in this world ever again. The noise ceased on a sudden, as it had begun, and when we, taking heart of grace, peered into the room, there he lay, dead upon the floor.

It hath always been a matter for conjecture to me, whether indeed Shubaal, his senses sharpened preternaturally by the approach of death, overheard our felony and died in a despairing effort to escape out of the slaughter house, or whether, its supreme faintness getting hold of him, that horror which he seemed to have of dying alone, contrary I think to the general sentiment of dying men, led him to us. Upon this first supposition, that is, that Calamy overheard our cabal, which indeed may have happened without miracle, for I remember not at what pitch we talked; I cannot resist to relate an anecdote of the holy servant

of God, Father Rabatier, which I heard while at school. He, lying near dead of a fever at Eu, some few hours before his death was seized with a swoon or lethargy so profound his soul had seemed already passed out of his body, but that by holding a mirror before his mouth, and attentively observing the motions of his breast, 't was perceived life lingered with him still. In the third hour of this trance, suddenly waking, he with a loud and cheerful voice begins to recite the *Nunc Dimittis*, or Cantic of Simeon, which is the last of our Compline, and this being intoned to the end without pause or signs of weakness, with his hand he motions for silence and bids them render thanks unto God for seven most glorious crowns of martyrdom just now achieved in Japan by as many members of our order, priests and lay brothers, being a company that had gone out from Eu three years before, of which thing God had permitted him to be a witness during his trance; and though he gave not many particulars, nor indeed the names, the weakness so miraculously refreshed in him laying hold again upon his senses when they would be questioning him eagerly, as though 't were not God's will too much of these hidden wonders should then be revealed; yet upon a careful comparison of the date and hour, it was afterward ascertained, when the complete narrative of this joyful event could reach unto Europe, which was from Father Girao, at Manila, unto Father Vitelleschi,—I say 't was then manifest, that at the selfsame hour the servant of God lay entranced, these things were done at Zeddo of Japan.

Well, well, when we had picked up Calamy from off the floor, and it being ascertained life was fled, had

laid him upon a great settle that was in the kitchen, composed his limbs and closed his staring eyes (and Lord how sharply did I remember the last time I had performed such offices, which was for my father and thought how those dear saints in heaven must disown and abhor this evil fruit of their bodies), says my mistress with a cheerful face:

"You thought me very irreligious just now, Richard, when I would not kneel down and say 'Our Father' with you, but I assure you I will do it now."

"Do it now?" says I, aghast, "and wherefore?"

"Because," says she, "we are clear of blood guiltiness."

"How are we clear?" I asked her.

"You slew him not," she answered.

"But," says I, astounded at such a course of reasoning, and the mind that could entertain it, "therein was no mercy shewn by us. 'Twas God took him out of our hands."

"You are not glad, then," says she, opening her eyes at me, "that he died not at your hands?"

"Glad," I echoed, in a kind of fury at her, catching her arm, while a red mist seemed to be in eyes and brain, "no, no; I am not glad but sorry, sorry," kissing her, "that I smothered him not, as my mind was made up to do."

She turned deadly pale, and shrank from my embrace.

"You speak wildly," said she, "you are unhinged, and no wonder. What reason in God's name have ye to be sorry for it?"

"Because," said I, "if I had killed him, then would there be such a bond betwixt us two, mistress, as you could never break. Only then might I call myself your lover, when I had paid for your love, and not a

guest within your arms, whom impulse harbours and may yet cast forth."

And letting her go, I buried my face in my hands. Oh! what an horrible flood of black despair brimmed my heart at that moment! What a conviction of the worthlessness of all I had done to secure me one instant's peace or security in her affections for whom the sacrifice was made! Even so shall every man that turneth from God, some day fall down, needy and desperate, before the Baal of his election.

"What am I to understand," said she, "that it is your fancy to dub yourself murderer?"

"I shall call myself by my right name," said I.

"And to drag me in, too, as co-partner to your remorse?"

What could I answer? Down in my heart I knew well that I would never have it so, knew well that that perverse incomprehension she had of responsibility and remorse was like to be my chiefest comfort in days to come. 'T is a terrible thing to be too well understood by our familiars, to have our sad silence ever rightly interpreted, and a voice given to our secretest forebodings. Let men prate of sympathy as they will, I know that instrument is the hardest to be borne, which is the exactest pitched unto their own sad imaginings, and be sure David understood well wherefore the javelin was cast at him.

"Come, Richard," said she, seeing I was silent, and taking away the hands from my face; "be a man, Calamy is dead by God's hand, no other. To-morrow all the rest shall seem to you an evil dream."

"Never! never," says I. "I shall never forget to-night." She flung my hands from her impatiently.

"As you will then," said she, "but remember this:

my hands are clean of it. If you chose to take an idle word, scarcely uttered than recalled, as a warrant for his death, 't is your affair, not mine. For the rest, you are never to mention this matter to me again. That is my command to you. Do you heed me, Richard?"

"Have I ever reproached you," said I, looking at her white set face. "Is not the one prayer left on my lips that I may bear all the guilt, now and for ever?"

"Guilt, guilt!" she repeated shrilly, stamping her foot. "Forbear that word! will you never have done with it? I see well what is your intent. You will never be satisfied until you have me down in the same slough of despair as yourself."

"No, no!" cried I, getting to my feet, "not you, not you, Agnes. Pray God, dear, only the pleasant ways for you."

I would not let her answer, but kissed her until, her own passion rekindled, she kissed me back. It might be thought the presence of that dead man, scarce yet cold, would be a constraint upon us. Far from it.

"We are not dead," laughs I into her ear, "but warm, alive and merry. I will thank God with you for that much, Agnes. What is one dead man? thousands more will die ere it be day. He had his turn, now 't is ours."

The dawn was become broad day before she sent me away; the birds trilling their matins in the trees and currant bushes. My eyes smarted like two dry wounds, the grey morning looked reproach upon me, as a nun upon a roisterer. You have seen my sufferings, now see what I had gained? I was wishing there had been no light, that I might have one memory the less of my mistress's changeful face.

CHAPTER XVIII

BEING now arrived at the accident whereby all the happiness I had promised myself in my sin was abrupted, 't is become time, I think, that I should strive to answer a question which I have often put to myself during those bitter councils and communings which a defeated soul holdeth within itself; I say, I would ask myself how came it, that all the tempest of hatred, of revenge and contumely which you shall see presently break upon my silly head was so little foreseen by me whom it so concerned to have watched for it, that when it befel, I was like a man withdrawn into a chamber in some castle of enchantment, which in a moment, by the striking of a clock, by the losing of a spell, hurls its woven warriors and painted monsters upon him to tear him into bloody shreds. I ask what veil obscured my eyes and muffled my ears to all the portents of its imminence? Was it vanity? Did my neck, freed from its hateful collar and token of servitude, rear and stiffen incontinently, inviting a deeper humiliation? Was I in one word a beggar set upon horseback, bent upon a headlong course to the devil?

I think not. Some aloofness, indeed, there may have lingered in my carriage to our neighbours; old habits not to be put off in a moment, and easy to be mistook for frowardness, if so, God knows 't was not shared by my heart. No, rather I was forever comparing my fetters to their free limbs, my slavery

to their mansuetude, and finding little in the comparison to feed or flatter pride. What a commentary was it indeed upon the worth of the graces that distinguished me from them to procure a man's advancement or consideration in a world busied only with essentials, that here stood I at the end of my third decade of life, a hewer of wood and a server at table to these homespun men, their pupil when they had patience to teach me, in the commonest arts of husbandry, weaker than the weakest, nakeder than the poorest of them. Was there aught, think you, in these considerations likely to puff up a man such as I was even then, wise enough to realise the full measure of his degradation and oh, above all sensitive enough to feel it realised by others and to surprise its expression in the modulation of a voice, the flicker of an eyelid?

Since, then, my own conscience requites me so handsomely of unkindness unto the partners of my labour, to what shall I ascribe the consensus of ill-will, that like the down-turned thumbs of a Roman auditory demanded my destruction when I lay, tripped and sprawling, in the net of evil accident? From one in my condition 't will appear a monstrous paradox; nevertheless do I believe 't was envy and little else lay at the root of the general disfavour. Envy! say you and of what? of your collar? of your kennel? Even so. Envy of that which I had and of that which I had not; of my collar because it marked me out a man removed from the restraints of public discipline, and established in a covenant more indulgent if more degraded; of my kennel — because therein was a retirement and seclusion, wherein their wits and coarse observances could not reach me.

They saw no shame in my servitude because neither stripes nor deprivations attended it, and verily I believe had the collar when 't was taken off my neck been put up at auction, there would not have wanted bidders at the outcry.

There was, indeed, a fellow from the town that had a game leg, who very soon after Calamy's death came to the house looking to fill his old office, which was a desirable one to so idle a rascal. My mistress refused him on the score of his lameness, in a manner, I thought lacking in humanity, for I would have a woman gentle to all that are afflicted, even though this was a worthless fellow; yet afterwards he must stay to supper, which could not be refused him, even in this niggardly country, where, Mr. Joslin hath told me, he stayed at a wealthy man's house, bringing letters to introduce him, and was charged a bill at the week's end for his entertainment. I say then he must sup with us, and after, being full, would not be prevailed upon but he should sleep the night, too, in Calamy's old bed, which besides deterring me from a rendezvous we had planned, filled me full of terror as well as rage, lest I should betray myself in my sleep. I committed therefore, a very grievous, foolish action and told the cripple I had a favourite sister upon whom my thoughts ran much to-night, meaning upon further interrogation to say her name was Agnes, and so forestall suspicion; but he, either because naturally a surly knave, distorted in mind as well as body, or disappointed because his errand had availed him nothing, would not listen, but damns me roundly and my family, too, in such terms as from another man and at another time I would not have endured, but now was thankful for his crassness; and,

indeed, this was such a boor, I think I might have sung the Canticle all night, and he deduced nothing therefrom.

And here, let me confess at once, that while I can declare with hand on heart I earned no man's malice during this time, though I tempted God every hour, yet I can see now plainly how many a good occasion to get their goodwill, and by soft answers to turn away wrath, passed by me through my own remissness. There are few men, I believe, certainly I am not of them, so blind or so besotted, as looking back over a long life of failure and mischance, they perceive not some special fault or lack in them which hath been a cause thereunto. And in my own regard, I understood full well, there is or was (since I humbly trust I am a man born over again) one most fatally loose joint in all my life's armour for the world's weapons to pierce; I mean, a certain carelessness or, to be more precise, incomprehension of other men's opinions of my words and deeds. It seems I am a man so strained and scrupulous, with so strict a monitor within my breast, compared with whose censures the judgment of the severest would be indulgent and his complaisance easy got, that 't is scarce to be wondered at I should not regard too curiously the strictures of men. It is needless to give instances now, nor could it well be done without involving others, but I would say it was this temper that led to my quitting Omers under a cloud not of the rosiest; also to that black mark that was against my name in the King's army all my service, until the day which, screening and sifting men beyond the tests of Gideon, left none but the tried and true. Think not I praise this spirit, rather I see now that in the world's polity, since men

and the agreed opinions of men do stand for so much beyond abstractions of right or wrong, he is not only not to be blamed, that will regard them, so far as they conflict not with the truth, but even to be commended and invited into that pleasant symposium, because God seemeth, alas, so to dispose things upon earth, that he who will put his shoulder to the wheel is crushed beneath it, he who will not bow, uprooted.

Last of all, 't is to be remembered to my indulgence, that I was a man very sincerely, very deeply, very whole-heartedly enamoured. If I saw men, they were as trees walking; I knew not did the sky darken for rain or clear for sunshine, but never a shepherd at lambing, or reaper at harvest, or mariner at the equinox watched it as I my mistress's blue eyes and dear candid brow for their portents of fair or foul weather. 'T was my delight to anticipate her will, to forestall her behests, and they were very contrary ones and at times a little harsh. That early roughness to me in her speech never quite wore off; since then 't was a part of her, I grew to love it with the rest. Nay, shall I be quite frank, since this is a confession? It became in time the most poignant of all my guilty pleasures thus to debase my mind beneath a meaner, and to leave all its delicacies at the mercy of so hasty, inconstant, and ruthless a temper. There is a debauchery of the intellect that reacheth far beyond any of the body, is more deadly and more desperate. Those only will understand me in whom spirit and clay are mingled in something the same proportion as my own; for the others, enough to say, this depth I reached,— then, let it pass. I am not, or was not, of the temper ever to feel secure of a woman's love, being prone rather to meet sorrow half way and further — to feel

the parting in the meeting — winter in the solstice — darkness in light — death in life; yet, although I never promised myself her love but on uncertain lease, and down in my guilty heart felt the stir of catastrophe, as a girl betrayed the motion of her babe, with qualms of terror that sometimes when I was alone, or she delayed at our meetings, would snatch away my breath,—although the assurance of an ill ending to my passion was never away from me, not during the utmost transports of love, for never, alas, was my judgment colder than at such passages, whereof it seemed to me I was no actor, but a spectator, that watched a madman clasp a phantom to his breast, yet, I say, could I have foreseen its term and foreclosure, there is no sacrifice conceivable, of body nor soul — not the quenching of an eye nor the severance of a member — not the foreswearing of my honour nor the abandonment of my faith, but I would have offered it for a day's continuance. Thank God! I say now, thank God! she guessed not or valued not her power over me enough to use it; to what depths might not my feet have descended, with what stain my lips and arms be now endued!

For the rest, I was a very abject, a very faint-hearted lover. With each concession of her favour I but asked the more humbly for another; nor did my ardour ever so press me but a hint of her disinclination sufficed to check it. This is not a common temper in lovers; it was very evident to me she was puzzled by it, and, such the contrariety of human nature, I doubt not it often gained me my point and came to be considered by her only an artifice the more. Yet 't was not so — I swear I was often secretly thankful for a day that ended innocently, and valued others rather because

they were a repeated assurance of her love than upon any meaner assessment. In all ways I strove to give our love the innocent sober aspects of a lawful union, hoping, poor fool that I was, thus to find a little of its security. The follies and trivialities which lovers use I was ashamed of in my heart, and sought to keep them within bounds (which was a hard matter with her) and so I was not expected to answer them in kind, which I never could do gracefully, I oftentimes was tempted to concur in them, and indeed upon her lips they were adorable. Fear not I shall repeat them here; she had a hundred eke-names for me after the loving fashion of women, but I could never be persuaded to call her out of her name, Agnes, which surely is the most beautiful in the world, or by that old title of respect which I had used in days to which I not unfrequently caught myself looking back regretfully, though you will remember I suffered much in them; but 't is a trick of time to filch away bitter memories and leave the sweet as a torture more refined. There was one word, however, so pretty, in her mouth, I cannot forbear to set it down here, none the less that she caught it from me. 'T was one time I had sought for long to persuade her to some little matter, I forget now what, to which she was averse, and found her unyielding and full of nay-says. "Will ye not do it, madam," says I, at last, "seeing 't is me that asks you?" whereat I know not why, she laughed very pleasantly and came at once into a good humour, and, kissing me and repeating in as near my accent as she could attain: "Seeing 't is for you, Diccon," I had my way, I forget now in what, but, ever afterward, when giving me some ungrateful task to accomplish, she would repeat, with a sweet

pursing of the mouth: "Seeing 't is for me, Diccon," and this was the only toy I ever paid back in a like coinage.

Alas, how far from my confession's intent have these memories led me already! Sweet sinful hours, whose memory must haunt and vex me until death; in whom, as a serpent in honey, is the distortion of my crime embalmed forever; each night renewing the savour of you on my lips, and every morn the hunger for you in my heart! Oh destiny unspeakable—of a couch to be made my cross!

And now, dear Lord, to-night I can write no more. My heart hath overflowed at my eyes, and I, seeing the drop fallen on this poor record, marvel that 't is not of blood, even such as from Thine own anguished forehead, soaked the grass in Gethsemane.

CHAPTER XIX

SUPPOSE some three months to have passed; there fell a day that is memorable to me on many accounts; one is, that for the first time I had some advertisement of what a general ill-will I had earned, how I have sufficiently conjectured, in this colony.

It was late autumn, the woods, in this decadence of the sun's empire, wearing such imperial hues as my pen despairs to set down. There is no season, in our hemisphere, like this that followeth the first night frosts. The air is not misty as with us, but wondrous clear and still; a footfall is heard afar off; a bird's call seemeth pitched to a higher note, insistent for reply; sweet, sickly odours arise from the earth as though the year anointed it for burial. 'T was on such an autumn day, then, about four in the afternoon or later, I rode back through the forest from Summerfield whither I had been sent upon a report that letters were come in from my master at Newhaven, but had found none. In the town and along the road I thought that many regarded me more curiously than now was usual. I gave them all good day civilly, as is my wont, but found their staring eyes very irksome.

I have explained, in my first description of this settlement, that there lay or was left a strip of forest in between Summerfield and the Long Meadow, worn away each year from either side by the axes of the

pioneers. This beautiful wood, fated so soon to disappear, had for me, like all threatened things against which man's hand is raised, a romantic interest of its own far beyond that greater forest that encompassed it all around as the ocean a land locked bay, and of which it had once been a part. Even the path that had been hewn from it, I fancied, marred not but enhanced its loveliness, and as a section through a block of coloured marble reveals the buried splendour of its hues and veins, so here were heights or depths where the sunshine swam like water, trunks mottled like pheasants' wings, bare roots lichened like weedy staunchions of a wreck, buried for countless ages in the blackness of primæval forest until man came and, like God, saw they were good. Also, for me there was not a rod of this track, but had already its memory, tender or bitter, rapturous or regretful, never unmingled with sorrow, or it had not been mine. Here was the felled tree near which we had dismounted on that mad night when God's angel rode up behind us, oh! and others where no angel came, unless it was my guardian angel to weep. Here was a turn of the road, where I might draw bridle to watch the pageant of the setting sun, and in the fading clouds see the promised land which I had bartered away; here the forest fell from my shoulders, the mist of evening rose off of the fields, and house lights twinkled and house dogs barked, and one light is kindled to guide me home, one chimney smokes that I may cheer my jaded limbs at the hearth below it.

Home! home! what a blinking ignis fatuus wast thou to lead my steps from God; forgot, abhorred, the stars that should have steered my sandalled feet, upon what quaking bogs and stagnant pools they

stumbled! Say, what traveller ledest thou home to-night; or doth the rain drench your hearth, dead leaves litter your floor, snows bury your crumbling walls, no rash hand daring to efface the Ichabod God wrote upon you by my act?

At the fringe of the wood where the wood cutters had laboured all last winter, there lay a pile of logs, of no great bigness, lopped of their branches and piled to dry. Now, 't was the law of this colony then, and may be to-day, that standing timber belonged to him who should care to fell it, yet once cut down, 't was his property by whose hands or at whose charges 't was cut down. This pile of lumber was my master's, designed, I well knew, to build a dam and mill down by the stream; it was marked in paint with those initials that had been on my collar, it had been hewn by labourers paid and fed by him, and by every law and equity was his no less than the cattle in his byre. I was surprised, then, to perceive a team of horses, none of ours, standing here, yoked to a sled whereon some of the smaller logs were laid, and to see by the disposition of the pile that much had already gone the same road.

There was a boy standing in charge of the horses, munching his dinner; the men were some distance off at theirs, but I could hear their coarse laughter very clear upon the still air of the October noontide.

"Whose horses are these?" says I to the lad; pulling up.

"I know naught," says he, staring upon me, and munching like a beast.

"Have ye your mistress's leave to shift the logs?" I asked him.

He shook his head and began to look around for his mates.

"Ye can ask the men," he says; sidling away and looking uneasily at my whip.

It needed not to ask; the sled was turned in a clean contrary direction to the brook and the tracks shewed whither the missing logs had sped. On a sudden my blood boiled at these mean thieves, who, advantaged by their master's absence, were pilfering for their private use the logs they had taken his wages to fell, and jumping off my best, I pulled out my clasp-knife.

The urchin ran off as fast as his clumsy legs would carry him, over roots and logs, in the direction of the voices, calling out:

"The papist! the papist! he is cutting the traces."

The severance was just complete and I back on my beast, when the men (there were some seven or eight of them) came out from behind the pile, buckling their belts, and flushed with their dinner or perhaps the shame of discovery. I flicked the team I had cut loose with my whip, and set them off down the path, so that the two must run after them, but the others came upon me, and I liked not the odds.

They covered me with abuse, calling me "dirty Irishman, dirty slave, Irish dog," and the like, and when I made my horse rear in the air, to keep them off, looked for stones to fling; but I only laughed back at them, until presently one, the ringleader, a great ruddy giant with a neck like a bull's and little whitish curls like pine cantles over his head, steps toward me, very polite, pushing the others back.

"Well master Rapparee," said he; "ye think ye have done a pretty trick with your clasp-knife, do ye not?"

Now," says he, "let's see if ye be as hefty and bold to a man's face as y'are behind a horse's rump. My mates," says he, designating his fellow plunderers, "will see fair play and help ye from your horse if help you need, while we two," he says, "will stand to one another like Britons, and if I do not put such a face on ye, master, as the widow will not know when ye reach home, then call me papist myself. And that," he continues grinning and spitting upon either palm, "is a damned handsome English offer to a damned ugly Irish rogue."

The crowd laughed and stood around to see the sport, beckoning their comrades, who had by now caught the horses, to hurry and miss none of it. Their champion having anointed his hands, began to whirl his arms as though to limber himself for the fray; I believe all looked I should dismount, and suffer him to batter my face for their diversion.

"Listen," says I, "you are very funny, but a cur dog ever yelps best in mid pack. Were I a free man and this a private quarrel, I daresay I should be fool enough to get off my horse and let you belabour me. But I am only a poor slave, as ye have just reminded me, indentured by your own laws to defend my master's property with his wit as well as his strength. You call me 'Irish dog,' well, he is a faithful beast, but useth teeth and not fists. There are mine," says I, pulling out the pistols from their holsters, at which all jumped back. "I know ye are armed," for I had passed them going to their work, and no man in this country but carryeth at least a fowling piece. "I know ye have arms, and give you all the time in the world to get them. But of this be sure," I told them, "the first two men that touch those traces to

refasten them get each a bullet in his brain. Therefore," says I, my lips beginning to crack, which was ever an infirmity of mine when engaged upon a quarrel, "there are three dead men among us, myself, and two others whom ye may choose from among you."

Well, it seems they were bent for fisticuffs but nothing more heroical, for presently, one after another, they began to draw off, their Hector not the last, to the wood-pile for their coats and arms, and then back to the road through the trees, with much conference, but without crossing my path again; I be sure all this time with my pistol cocked, for I could not believe but they meant to shoot at me from the wood-pile, and I will say this, there is no Irishman nor Frenchman that would not have attempted me, for which I could not blame him, since by my words and armed posture there was war now declared betwixt us, and he who first breaketh the peace must not repine if its stratagems are first practised upon him. These were brave men, but nowadays warlike; this is a quality clean different.

After they were gone, and the noise of them even no longer to be heard, I sat still upon the horse, with my weapons out, watching the ground, and fallen, upon the subsidence of my passion, into a dreamy condition that hath often overcome me in like circumstances. The afternoon was hot, I remember; bees droned heavily in some hollow tree, my horse stood with drooped head, not moving but to shift his feet or thrash the flies from his flank. I had the less haste to be home because all that forenoon my mistress had been in ill-humour, a thing I laid to her anxiety about the letter, and now since I could not relieve this concern, I shrank from disappointing

her even in a matter nowise my fault, for women consider not these things, and like all tyrants 't is a ticklish thing to bear them unwelcome tidings.

Midway in this reverie, wherein it might be said I saw all my thoughts slip by me, yet laid hold on none, comes a horse's heels at my back, and Mr. Chapin gave me good day, coming from the town.

Chapin was a man of the middling height, with a rueful earthen coloured countenance and coarse black hair sown with grey. He had been a soldier in the Pecod war, though I could scarce credit it, and nigh killed by the bursting of a powder magazine, which had left him very deaf and tender-eyed.

I answered him civilly yet not as one disposed for conversation, but he reined up, regarding in turn the sled, the logs, the severed traces, my armed fists, last of all my face.

"'T is true then," says he, "what the men have just now told me, that you have cut their traces and pulled your pistols in the highway upon the king's lieges?"

"No! no! not the king's lieges," says I, "they are dead, or hiding, or in servitude."

He flushed a little and bit his lip.

"'T was a mistake very natural," says he, "my tongue was trained to talk before my head to think."

"So much the more pity," said I, "that what learned loyalty last should forget it soonest."

"Come, come, Mr. Fitzsimon," says he, "upon this matter we must agree to stay at odds. It altereth not that you have done a most grievous foolish action, for which I fear me you may yet have to suffer."

"Suffer," says I, in amazement, "for hindering a felony?"

"Felony is a harsh word," says he, "a log of wood by here by there is no great matter. Think you Mr. Fleming would grudge it them? But," says he, picking up his reins, "I must get to your house whither I was on my way. Will you please to come with me, or do ye stay sentry here?"

I could see no reason to remain longer; my attitude, indeed, I could see appeared to him one very trivial, and I made haste to justify it as I rode along by his side.

"By favour, sir," says I, "I think your reasoning much at fault, nor should it govern my conduct how Mr. Fleming might dispose of his goods. I am in no sense his steward, nor is any discretion given me. I take but the wages of a beast, that is my food and drink; 't is a hard condition, yet this much of good to it, that my degradation absolveth me of responsibility."

"They say ye flew at them," says Chapin.

"No more than any watchdog," says I, "I will come off as readily when I am called."

"And who is to call you?" he asks.

"My mistress," says I, rolling that dubious word under my tongue, to taste all its sharp, shrewd sweetness.

Chapin regarded me earnestly and curiously.

"I believe," says he, "there never was a man felt his chains so heavy, nor jangled them so merrily."

"Harkee, Mr. Chapin," said I, bending from my saddle to be near his dulled ear, "you are a thinking, understanding man, I perceive; let me then confess to you I have often felt the burden of my free will when I had it more intolerable than the yoke that is upon my shoulders now and the collar that lately was around my neck. And not a Calvinist of ye all," says I merrily, for this disputation put me in high humour,

deprived as I had been of such for so long, "not a Calvinist of ye all, but would confess the same were he honest."

Mr. Chapin smiled gravely, but would not be drawn on to a discussion, wherein he saw, I doubted not, confusion coming to himself.

"At least, Mr. Fitzsimon," says he, "I will admit this, you are a very loyal servant, if a very foolish man."

"Oh sir!" said I loftily, "commend me not for that. I come of a breed that suck in loyalty with their mother's milk, and after find its practice very easy, the same if it be paid by stripes as by stipends, by prisons as by preferment."

"Ye would have died then, Richard!" says he, looking away between his horse's ears, and calling me for the first time by a name I grudged upon his lips. "Ye would have died to save a log of your master's, that he valueth not nor gives a thought to."

"Ay," says I, "and will again to save a stick of his kindling."

Mr. Chapin smote his leg, making his horse to rear up.

"Oh strange contrariety of the human heart!" says he, "for that which hath no worth you will hazard your life, while that which is dearer to him than house, than land, than life itself, you would destroy rather than cross a whim, short lived," says he, "as that ephemeris I destroy now," flicking at a swarm of midges with his whip.

"How now, sir," says I sharply, "how now? I understand you no longer."

"No, no," he said, shaking his head and spurring on, "if you be as wise a man as I take you for, Richard Fitzsimon" (who had but now called me a foolish

one), "enough hath been said; if not, more would be wasted."

I replied not, but trotted on with a bowed head. Whence, indeed, had I wished to answer, would words have reached me? Oh harsh logic of right and wrong; immutable and unanswerable, where shall flesh hide from you? how escape you? under what rocks? within what caves? What tumulus of sin through a life's evil labour hath raised it shall cover man in from you? what tortuous darkness of the will keep out your light? He only shall outface you that can outface God.

And lest it seem strange that I resented not that comparison of my love, instituted so lightly, with a switch amid a cloud of gadflies, let me confess that here again it seemed to me truth spoke. Upon that score I never was deceived, or if so, 't was in a clean contrary direction to the common besotment of lovers. I did look forward to a day when I should love my mistress no more, tho' as to a day whereon I should see no more, breathe no more, live no more. I thought such heart changes inevitable as death. I could not, if I would, so sin against the illumination of a whole life's experience as to believe I had in a transitory world laid hold here on something stable and enduring. No, no; that oath, which every callow green lover takes so lightly, in the first heat of a first passion, never was on my lips. It has taken me a lifetime to discover the constancy of my own heart.

I cannot remember that we spoke again on that journey until quite near the farm, when:

"Do you sleep alone, Richard?" he asks me.

I told him yes, turning away my face. At that time I had not had to blush so much for others as since, and reddened easier than I can to-day.

"I think," says he mildly, as tho' not noticing my confusion, "'t were well you had a mate to share both your room and your labour."

"I want none," said I shortly, flushing now with anger, for I felt he was a plotter against my happiness.

"I do not think," he went on, "the men you discountenanced to-day will get to violence, and I may myself pour a little oil on those troubled waters. Still, he that hath made an enemy should have a witness by his side."

"I will bring Grim the dog into my hut," says I, "he followeth me everywhere."

"Well, well," finding me stubborn, "it may be my fears are idle ones. And here are we at the gate."

"Shall I stable your beast for you, sir?" said I when he was got down; "do ye stay to supper? Oh!" thinks I, "if wishes were horses, what a fine beast would you have to bear you back home."

"Hitch him to the post," says Chapin, "I am not for long," and with that goes into the house, looking in his black coat and hat like an upholder come to measure the dead for shroud and coffin.

As Mr. Chapin had promised, so he stayed not long. 'T was not two hours after when he rode away, and I, who had been watching for his departure from the stable, went into the house-place.

I found my mistress sitting in the dusk, and in a great despondency. She rose not to welcome me, and when I went over and kissed her, suffered but did not return the caress, and I was surprised to find her cheek still wet from tears.

"I have brought you no letter, Agnes," says I.

"The letter!" says she, "Chapin hath brought it."

I marvelled that he had not told me.

"Is there bad news therein?" asked I, going on my knees to comfort her.

"Here 't is," she answered, handing me a folded paper, and getting up to light the lamp, "read it for yourself if ye will."

There seemed no matter in it to call for her tears. It was dated from a place called Beaver Isle, twenty miles from the sea, and spoke of the return journey being some two weeks started. Some accidents there had been, as when are there not? One of the boats had been overset and its cargo lost: the men they mistrusted to set ashore, as there were rumours of a war party of Indians upon the Western or Dutch bank of the river, so must take them into the other boats to their great inconveniencing. Other matters in the letter related only to things of the house and estate; there was little tenderness as of a father to an adored and only child, and last of all, no reference in any way to myself; and I experienced to its full shame and bitterness, the nature of my illicit intrusion into this family, the master of which referred not once to me in a letter of six pages. I could not but feel a little hard and bitter as I returned it to her.

"I see no matter for tears in this letter," says I.

"You are not asked to dry them," she answered roughly.

I knew this mood, alas, by now, and was resolved to be patient.

"Sweetheart," said I, gently, "'t is I who must beg to do it, and not be besought. When you are an old grey woman, 't is not to those who would have shared your sorrows you will feel bitterest."

I fancied she hung her head at this rebuke, which

perhaps, is as much admission of wrong as ever will be got from a woman.

"To-night I am dispirited," said she.

"And well I know the reason thereof," cries I in a passion, "'t is because that black raven hath been here with his croaking, who is become such a familiar of the house, with his fish-wife of a partner, the very dog barks no longer at them."

Her own face reddened and swelled with anger.

"How dare you," she said, using a tone she had not taken to me since our intimacy, "how dare you speak so of friends of my father's and of mine. Who hath given you warrant to choose our guests and to approve or disapprove. What a beggar have I set up on horseback!" and the like harsh dialect.

"Agnes," said I, as soon as she ceased, my own anger disappearing at once when so hideous a reflection of it was presented to me; "Agnes," says I, "your anger in no ways convinceth me of wrong: first, because it ringeth false itself, being too sudden and too extreme for the occasion; secondly, because the cruel words you wound me with are manifestly not your own. They are poison, dear, but this minute poured into your heart, too foreign to its natural generosity to remain there, and so the more incontinently vomitted."

"If my heart be a generous one," said she, catching at the generosity and letting the rest go, a stratagem women practise in this wordy warfare, which maketh it very hard to contend with them creditably, "if my heart be generous, the more reason for you not to presume upon it. The Chapins are old friends of our house, and if your gentility be too fine to stomach them, it should be too fine to shew me the distaste."

Said I, "Think you 't is upon that score I mislike them?"

"Upon what other then?" says she.

Here was a pretty quandary. I could not tell her why, without arousing suspicions that I must rather be at pains to allay. Also, as I hesitated for a word, that speech of the bully about the widow, scarce noticed in the turmoil of the quarrel, returned to me with a painful significance. Here were we disputing about a flaw in our wall, and perhaps the whole fortress already undermined. And here suffer me to ask a question. How comes it that such scandals are ever the last suspected by those whom chiefly they concern; that rumour may cry aloud from the house-tops and be not heard in the house-place; the very street beggars call warning upon Cæsar yet Cæsar pass on to the senate house? Around those that are marked for destruction there would seem to be an ominous refraction of the air, that turns hatred into smiles, makes applause of contumely. *Quos Deus vult perdere*, saith the proverb, *prius dementat*,—whom God wills to destroy, first He makes mad. I know not if this be so, but sure am I He maketh them blind and deaf.

"I misdoubt," said I, at last, "they are not true friends to you."

"To be sure they are," says she, "as true as yourself."

"Forbear comparisons," said I, "how know ye what they speak when your back is turned?"

"How am I sure of yourself?" she retorted.

"What," says I, in amazement, "do ye believe, can ye conceive, that I should speak aught save good of you?"

"I know this," said she, "that 't is naught for a man

to prevail with a woman, unless he may go boast of it somewhere."

"I envy not your sorry knowledge," says I, "where got you it?"

"In the same place as yourself," she answers, "remember the widow in the Marshalsea, Richard. 'T is only to wait my turn."

"Agnes," said I, "that was a lie; a wretched fable invented to prick you."

"Is that true, Diccon," she asked, good-humoured once again.

Says I, "The woman was to me as my sister."

"Nay, not your sister, Diccon," says she pouting, "you said she was an old woman; say rather your mother."

"My mother, then," says I, "I swear to you she was as my mother. Are ye content?"

She put the hair off my forehead, and let me draw her to me.

"Sweetheart," said she, "you pretend to be simple, yet inwardly are as full of wiles as the evil one himself."

A proposition so monstrous, I could find no words fit to refute it. Alas, some will guess my lips had other employment.

CHAPTER XX

THAT night, or rather next morning, before I left her, she was seized with such a terrible fit of weeping, as passed not alone my art to comfort, but my wit to account for; that she was not angered at my clumsy efforts to console her, but rather kissed me back, so far from reassuring me, only disquieted me the more, and after staying by her as long as I dared and seeing her grow a little calmer, I went to my bed so disturbed in mind, and with such a weight of care at my heart, that even those few first grey hours of the morning, which were all I kept to supply the labours and emotions of a day, were spent by me, not in sleep, but in sorrowful surmise.

The next day my mistress came not to breakfast, nor did it escape me that such food as went up to her by the black maids came down untasted. By an intolerable mischance it was the day in the week that was busiest, the house filled with the trampling of men, come for their orders, for their wages, perhaps for the satisfaction of their curiosity. I might at another time have been curious in observing their demeanour, having regard to the ruffle of the preceding day, but every thought and apprehension was above stairs with the woman I loved, and I spent the forenoon in a fever, cursing the harsh conditions of our love that would not let me go to her, nor even betray my agitation.

There was a little peace at noon when the men were gone afield; and it seemed to my agonised mind

they dallied for hours over their pipes and coarse chatter. Then I ran upstairs, as a ransomed soul scales the steps of purgatory, and entered my mistress's chamber. I was shocked and distracted at the change in her face, which was visible even in the darkened room. Her cheeks seemed sunken, her eyes half opened, and her breathing short and hurried.

"Agnes! Agnes!" I cried, throwing myself on my knees beside the bed, "what hath befallen you?"

"Where have you been all the morning, Richard? she asked fretfully, "you who asked to share my troubles."

"I could not," says I, "I dared not, for your own sake, come near you; the house hath been filled with men since morning."

"Are all gone now?" she asked.

I told her they were afield.

"And the Negro wenches?"

"They are washing at the ford-stones."

Says she, "Will ye do something for your mistress, Richard?"

"Oh command me, Agnes!" cried I, "command me love! my heart hath bled for you all morning. Another hour and I should have gone crazed."

"'T is nothing," said she, "be not so tragic, goodman! Only to put your hands under the clothes and feel my feet, are they cold. I cannot feel them at all," she added with a weak little laugh, "hot or cold."

I obeyed her; they were indeed cold as ice. I shivered at this contact as with dead flesh.

"I hear you chatter," said she, "to touch them; but I have lain thus since sunrise."

"Would I could warm them in my bosom, madam," cried I.

"There needeth something more practical," said she; "my voice is weak; put your ear down near my mouth."

I put it next her lips. Her face was clammy and had that relaxation of the jaw muscles that is said to be an index to great inward pain.

"Do ye know the great Dutch irons upon the chimney shelves?"

"To be sure," said I, "I watched you iron with them Tuesday se'night."

"Heat the frogs," said she, "as quickly as may be; put them in the boxes, muffle all in a woolen cloth and lay them to my feet. Can you do this, think you, quickly and deftly?"

"Yourself," said I, "shall be the judge."

"Come back to me," said she, "as soon as you have put the irons to heat."

When I was back at her side.

"Lean over me again," said she, "and when I speak interrupt me not. This is one of your failings, Richard, to be always breaking in upon my instructions to you."

I promised her I would stay my tongue; my heart seemed to be still already.

"Do you see a chest down by the bed head?" said she.

I looked, and saw a little wood case, clamped curiously with iron, such as treasure is packed in or coin to pay soldiers.

"Try can you lift it," she said, "it hath handles at the side to raise it withal."

I took it up, surprised to find it so light.

"I can raise it to my shoulder," I told her.

"That is well. Hearken then, Richard, should I die ——"

"Die," cried I, aghast at so harsh a voice to my forebodings, "die! Die when?"

"To-day, to-night, to-morrow," said she, impatient through all her tears.

I flung myself weeping upon the bed.

"You shall not die, Agnes," I cried, "you cannot die," and kissed her passionately, "whatever plague hath smitten you, it shall smite me as well."

"Who speaketh of plagues," she said, turning her face away from me on the pillow. "You said you would be still, you swore you would listen to me. Dear God! what a reed to lean upon is this man in time of trouble."

"You tell me you are about to die," said I, exasperated, "as though ye said to sleep; and look that I bear it as quietly. What hath overtaken you? You were well and in good liking only last night."

"Dear Richard," said she, quietly, but I thought through her teeth, "do you love your mistress, hast ever loved her?"

"You know it well."

"Then," said she, "listen unto her now. It may be the last favour she ever shall ask you."

I checked my weeping; only the great sobs and hiccoughs, these were beyond my power to repress.

"Are you grown calm?" she asked.

I signed with my head for her to go on.

"Should I die then, Richard, there is one thing you must do for me, and to do it the moment my breath hath ceased; before you indulge your own grief with a tear. Promise it me, Richard."

When I had promised:

"Swear it," said she.

I sealed it with an oath.

"'T is to take that chest I have shewed you on your shoulders; if it be in the day time, and you are

questioned, answer not. If ye are followed, slay him that followeth; but your wit must help you there—I am too weak to tell you more.”

“And after?” says I, when she had recovered her breathing a little.

“Sink it,” said she, “in the deepest part of the river; in that pool where you were near drowned yourself and of which they say no man hath ever found bottom. Is this too hard a task for you?” she asked, gripping my wrist.

“Calm yourself, poor woman,” said I, “’t is as though the thing were done.”

“And after,” she said, falling back upon the pillow, “never to speak of it to living soul, not if they torture you.”

“’T is more conceivable,” I told her, “that I shall tie it round my own neck and leap in with it.”

“Nor to me if I recover; and now bring up the irons.”

I must own the strangeness of this request, no less than its urgency, and the tempest of questioning raised in my own mind, took off somewhat the shock of my mistress’s danger. There is not room in our souls for all emotions at once, no more than in our bodies for all diseases. The demand for action is an anodyne very potent unto grief, no less than grief a marvellous stimulant to action. In this connection there is a pretty sad little story, I cannot resist relating here, of which I was a witness in my first campaign.

THE STORY OF THE SIEGE OF HALBERSTADT

It was at the siege of Halberstadt, in Swabia, during which as is well known, the Swedish general died;

yet until his death so effectual was the leaven of his spirit among the Protestant garrison, altho' stricken for death then, and carried in a litter through the trenches, wherein no man the most exposed, but might perceive he had a better chance for his life among the fascines, than this general among his pillows; yet, I say, this corpse inspiring the living, this dead man warming the quick, was so great a reinforcement unto them, that for a time it seemed the whole campaign was like to be wasted for the sake of this mean petty fortress; which in the end came to breed so fierce an indignation in the Catholic army, that there never was a call for volunteers to make up the forlorn hope but our general could have his choice among the entire hierarchy, not only of the foot, but the horse as well, which arm is generally excused from this proof, and myself who tell of it have put my shoulder to a ladder along with a common pioneer; all availed nothing; no sooner the attack delivered than 't was repulsed, until it seemed the *non plus* of human valour had been overreached by the defence, and we might leave our bones under Halberstadt, but take it never.

In the mid of this despondency comes a spy from the town; their general (Banner) is dying, may be already dead, and can no more be carried to the trenches, whence arose as great a joy and assurance amongst the Catholics as though we were into the town already; since all, officers as well as the common ranks, were by this time persuaded that the inviolability of the town rested on this one man, and there was a cry for a storming party to go up and assault it incontinently.

It had become by now a practice, that too undue a

loss might not be suffered by those who for reason of their very forwardness could hardest be spared; I say 't was then the practice to choose out the forlorn hope from among our army in a rotation of regiments or brigades, and this morning 't was the turn of an Alsatian corps, all of whose officers volunteered with the exception of one company officer, Monsieur Hovelacque ('t is strange I should remember this name when so much else hath gone from me).

"Who is this backward man?" says our general, Piccolomini, a Milanese, a very subtle, understanding man, "who is this captain that volunteers not with the rest," and swore he would have him hung for a coward before the army.

"No, no," says his commandant, "this is no coward, sir, but a most luckless misfortunate man."

"Wherein is his misfortune," asks the general, "I have marked him often when going my round, he walketh up and down the lines wringing his hands, or sits outside his tent with his head in his knees.

"Why," says the officer, "the man hath a young wife not a year married that he brought with him; she, poor soul, lieth now two weeks at death's door and to-day 't is said must die."

"What is her malady?" asks our leader.

"'T is the worst of all fevers," replies the commandant, "that which followeth childbearing. The babe is dead of it already."

"And is there no doubt," says Piccolomini, "but she too will die to-day?"

"No doubt at all," replies his colonel; "the priest hath just now taken in the Viaticum and Holy Oils."

"'T is very well," saith the Italian, picking up his reins; "let the husband go in to her. The assault

shall be put off until she be dead, then," says he, "send him unto me, for 't is that man and none other shall lead the storming party."

By which, as is well enough known, the city was took at last, for the story getting about among the soldiers, distorted, as is the way of gross wits, there was a cry that this captain bore a charmed life, wherefore they pressed on after him the closer, and many marvels were related afterward, as that bullets swerved from him, which I think not any man could observe; also that a sword was thrust through him more than once and slew him not; he 't is said dispatched a score by his own hand before he fell, with wounds enough to kill ten men. Of this last I can take oath, for his stripped body was brought unto the general's tent, where I, being of the staff, had a sight of it; who only patted the corpse on the cheek, saying to his officers.

"*Melio affronta morte il morto;*" whence came to be a proverb so long as I was with the army. "Death striveth best with death."

No differently in mine own case. Although my body all that day seemed as like to burst with grief, as tho', denied the relief of my eyes, I wept into my distended heart instead; yet the fact that my mistress's death must be a signal unto me, not for mourning nor weeping, but to get about a mission wherein was not only difficulty but danger to myself, was as efficient a curb on grief as any stoic could administer, and 't is the truth, I spent the most of that day wondering how I should best sink the chest, how fasten stones to it, how carry it out on my shoulder when belike the house would be full of men, and the like minute

articles of my delicate office, rather than thinking upon that terrible catastrophe of my darling's death, so suddenly and so closely brought before my face, that I had not time yet to discover all its frightful lineaments.

As for what might be contained in this coffer that must be sunk with a millstone round it, lest scandal come thereby, I entertained scarce any curiosity. Of this hateful vice indeed I have none at all in my composition, rejoiced am I that I can say so, and 't is as much a scruple with me, outside of my ghostly office, to covet the secrets of any man's heart as to covet his goods or his wife. Besides, I was well aware what a genius have women for keeping intact the mementoes of their past life. I was amazed when destroying my poor mother's, an office my father had no time to do, to find what trifles she had treasured and saved from the flames wherein our inheritance perished. Faded flowers, packets of letters, tresses of hair, old swaddling clothes, her children's fallen teeth. Alas! alas! say I, is not memory a stubborn heavy jade enough without encumbering her with this charnel luggage? I know I never gave such relics to the flames myself without feeling lighter of heart for their evanishment.

Such an accumulation I made no doubt it was I was bidden commit to the waters, the sadder because no doubt, 't was flotsam from that old life concerning which she had made me her confidant. Believe me or no, the thing never troubled me then or after, or if so 't was with a dull consternation that never reached unto surmise. I can remember well, when I lay sick in the Marshalsea, there was upon the lime-washed wall opposite my bed a discoloration made by damp, into which, as I lay there hour by hour,

my famished eyes read so many an aspect grotesque and fearful, I grew at last to have a very fear of it, and would keep my eyes away and lie uneasy, rather than turn and regard it. Even so, then I kept and still do keep them averted. There are mysteries upon which the roving eye of flesh had best not gaze, lest, like Medusa's grin, they turn it to stone. What mystery was here I leave to God.

My fidelity was never tried. She recovered before evening, to my amazement. I had scarce put the irons to her feet before the malady began to leave her, her body to grow more flexible, and her face to go back to its old unaltered aspect. Other measures I took, it matters not what, at her direction, and she was soon in a sleep like a child's, her hand clasping mine. When she awoke, for I would not disturb her untimely, but was in and out of the chamber a dozen times to be sure she slumbered still; when she awoke, I say, which was near sunset, I had her a mess of bread and milk which she took from my hand. My heart overflowed as she ate. I wept silently behind the curtains, for joy at the passing of this danger. Oh! I say, what a terrible thing 't was I could not take my full heart there and then to God and lighten it in prayers of thanksgiving. To Him who is infinite Love the affections of our hearts, no matter how depraved, turn at such a time naturally and inevitably as the needle to the North, and oh! what shackles, what fetters, what bolts, what prisons are our sins that hinder us! The marriage feast at which He may not be a guest, the house warming when He keepeth not the house, what tragic insecure festivities must these be, through whose shrill merriment is heard the mocking challenge of undisarmèd fate.

It was dark before I left her to take my own supper, I asked her was she now quite at ease.

"I am as well as ever in my life," said she; "were it not so late I would rise and come below stairs."

"What a marvellous malady is this," said I, "that comes so sudden and goes so soon."

"I have suffered it from my girlhood," she said, turning her face from the candle.

"Is there no drug that can cure it?" I asked.

I fancied an expression of great horror and aversion came over her face at the word.

"Drugs!" she repeated; "talk not to me of them,"

Said I, "What source of anxiety and alarm must these seizures be to your friends."

"I ask none to suffer on my behalf," said she; "I am one that bears my own burdens."

"Ah, Agnes!" I protested gently, "was not that an ungracious speech. I have tried to be a gentle nurse to you to-day. Have ye found me amiss?"

"I would like you better," she replied, "were you less of an inquisitor; I like not to catechised."

"Dearest," says I, "I forbear. Answer me only one question: is this illness like to recur?"

She was silent a while, and then, slowly:

"I think it not likely," says she.

"Thank God!" says I, fervently, falling on my knees, "Oh, thank God the danger hath past!"

I would not have known she wept, so silently did her tears flow, but that I saw her steal a corner of the sheet to her eyes.

"Why weep you, heart of mine? (embracing her) for a danger gone past?"

She put up her arms and strained me to her.

"All is sad that hath past, love," said she (Lord!

Lord! how true she spoke) "sin or sweetness, danger or delight."

We were both weeping now. Our tears mingled and we tasted together of their saltness. There was the penalty to be paid, fiery and overwhelming, yet I think that was the time God saw us and forgave us. I was the first that sought to move.

"Not yet! not yet!" she sobbed against my mouth.

There was a knock against the panels of the great door that was directly under one window of her chamber. She loosed me at once.

"I will see none to-night," she cried passionately.

"Not if it be Chapin?" says I.

"No one," she repeated, "no one."

"Nor his wife," said I, turning round with my hand upon the latch.

She sprang up in bed, and I thought would have leapt out upon me.

"Prating fool," said she, in a voice hoarse with anger, "will you never take a command from me without argument. Turn them away, and come not back yourself neither."

It was well I dallied no longer; the door was already unbolted and one of the negresses lifting the hasp. I pushed her aside and opened it myself, to see not Chapin nor his wife, but the huge figure of Captain Gideon against the glooming sky. Had it been the shrouded figure of my old housemate and fellow servant I think I could have been no more startled, yet neither the one nor the other could affright me, now.

"I would see your mistress," said he, looking over my head and making as if to pass.

"She sees no one to-night," says I, barring the way.

He turned his head and eyes upon me, as though by an effort of his whole body.

"Have you that from her lips?" says he.

"Yes," said I, turning my knife in the hollow of my hand; "take it now from mine!"

He held a riding whip and I could see his fist knot and swell as he clutched it tighter. Let me say at once I admired the man for his self-control. To have had that strength and not to have slain me with his hands, for every inflection of my voice was an insult, just as tho' I spat in his face, I say this was a marvellous and an admirable thing.

"Will you advise her ——" he began, then stopped, and turning slowly on his heel, went down the board walk to where his beast was tethered, mounted and rode off, his head hanging on his breast, like a wounded soldier's, and with never a glance in my direction from first to last.

CHAPTER XXI

MY SECURITY was very little ruffled by the return of this man, my avowed enemy, whom I had thought a score of miles away, and into whose ready hand later chance was to put the weapon that destroyed me. Not that from his patience and sufferance of this last rebuke I was so foolish as to argue safety; rather if I thought at all, I must have boded a purpose of revenge so steadfast, with a prospect of its satisfaction so definite, that he could afford to bide his time, and even from my insolence store up a new relish against it. I say, had I thought at all, because that night, though I saw my mistress no more according to her command, and the next morning, there was no room in my head for any fancies but the cheerfulness. The regrets and misgivings which until now had never failed to mar its happiness, seemed at last to have spread their wings and taken flight, like winter-loving migrants as the year takes hold on summer, and even the shadow of their passage, to flit no more across my heart. I was up early and much refreshed; it was a still close morning, as though dawn had found the earth yet warm from yesterday's sun; the crimson leaves hung limp upon the forest trees for the first gust of wind or drop of rain to strip. Autumn frosts were late this year, and here and there upon the lower branches, I failed not to notice, would be a little cluster of green buds, untimely births in a doomed people, for the sentence of death lay on

all. This morning winter was a thing not to be realised, and I went about my work with an happy bustle, for the first time in my life realising what a light curse Adam's might be did God but leave us a light heart for its enduring. It was not alone that I had seen a great danger pass by, but because yesterday and all its happenings had awoke in me afresh a hope that never had quite died, though I kept it hid in my heart — I mean that my mistress would yet be my wife.

I could not forget with what a strong arm she had swept away the scruples and terrors, that had come so near to dragging me away from her side on the night when for her sake I had tasted of hell, clearing away doubts from my path much as her father felled trees. "Be sure," says I, "when the time comes she will find a way to dislodge these others, which are little things beside them. What are a few rough words and imperious carriages? 't is you," and my heart leaped as I remembered it, "you she would have at her side when sick, and in trouble and danger, you to whom she would entrust her reputation when in the shadow of death," for in a dim uncertain way I realised that her good name was involved by what she bade me destroy; this thing never was clear to me, and never would be. "You whom in the early days of acquaintance she chose to be a confidant of the shameful and humiliating secret of her youth." My memory, like a busy officer, flew hither and thither, marshalling up all little tokens of tenderness and confidence the woman had bestowed upon me, and I was amazed at finding them such a host. "What proof is needed, what proof is needed more," cried I, "that I am loved?" I scarce

knew whether to curse or laugh at the crassness of mind that could hoard up every little harsh word, and not regard all this treasure of affection that lay under my nose. "She is right," I swore, "she is right. I would wear out the patience of God Himself. Never since the world began was so miserable, faint-hearted a lover. A woman fair enough to be the desire of all eyes, gives herself to me, and I so busy at puzzling out whether this kiss was as warm as the last, or that word more gentle than this, like some old analyst in horn spectacles amid his retorts and crucibles, am letting all the joy of my good fortune go by me. Richard Fitzsimon," says I, in a flash of self arraignment that sickened me, "see yourself one moment as you are. A man lacking the virtue to deny himself for the life to come, and the wit to snatch the pleasure of this."

I remember I had a little scented kerchief of hers in my shirt bosom that I had filched out of her chamber the day before. I took it out now and, pressing it to my lips, closed my eyes, and stood I know not whether a minute or an hour, in such a transport and rapture as nothing, no nothing, yet had given me, striving desperately to hold my happiness still for one moment, while I looked upon it, to know what thing was in my possession. I understood not then, poor fool! that 't was in the very nature of what I was doing to be a mirage and a phantasm, once over, harder to be recalled than a dream at midday, slipping through the brain as water or sand slip through fingers that strive to hold them. I thought the fault was in myself, not in my sin. Concerning this disability there is a very conspiracy of deception among men, each one of whom cloaks and hides his private chagrins from

his fellow. With boastful tales and lying advisees they set each other mutually striving to attain this chimera, and thus is the deadliest of all delusions perpetuated. In this matter there is none heareth truth save priests and physicians, and they but half, since few come to them but they bring a cloyed or a gnawing stomach with them; and, as 't was the sick and the halt, that most followed Jesus, so 't is the sick and fearful, the drooping in spirit and deformed in will that haunt the confessional, until sometimes, as a doctor from frequentation of sick chambers and spitals can scarce conceive of a well man, so am I driven to marvel, is there one soul that serveth its Maker rejoicing in the service!

My mistress made a great marvel of the Captain's return, whether sincerely or not I must doubt now, but at least if 't was acting I was deceived. An enclosure had come for him, she said, with her father's letter, and she was about to commission one of the labourers with it, when I offered to carry it myself. I did this the more readily because I was truly eager to confront the man, not out of any bravado but rather curiosity to judge from his manner how far I must look for our quarrel to go.

I liked not his way of swallowing an affront, since my wisdom told me he was no man to digest it easy, and some eructation or spew of his ill will upon me had been less disquieting than this retreat and silence. My heart quickened a little at meeting him again, yet 't was high too in my breast, and I sang as I led the saddled horse forth from his stable.

My mistress stood at the gate, shading the low autumn sun from her eyes with the letter I was to carry.

"What do you with that great sword on?" said she, when I came to her.

"'T is the guardian angel of my honour," said I loftily, tapping the hilt, "I stir not without it."

"More like a devil," says she, "to lead you into trouble. Take it off, 't is not your own."

"Sweetheart," I protested, "you would not have me go naked among men that bear me no love?"

She stamped her foot.

"I bid you take it off," said she. "Besides, you are not to call me 'sweetheart' out here where any might hear you. If you have no regard for your own repute, I pray you have some for mine."

I craved her pardon, very much dashed and down in the mouth.

"Have you pistols in your holsters, as well?" she went on, not heeding me.

"Yes," says I, sneering now, "must I give them up too?"

"Take out the flints and throw them on the grass," she commanded.

"What is this?" she continues when I had obeyed her like an urchin emptying his pockets for his dame; "what is this new absurd fashion of yours, to go riding about our little settlement, strapped up like a bully or drawcansir? I wonder you do not demand a feather for your hat. My father never would permit such manners, and ye presume in his absence. Small wonder you are derided and animadverted on. I tell you plainly, unless you amend your ways you will have every man's hand against you, and it may be more than we can do to save you."

I stood downcast while she lashed me with her tongue. Then, like a fool driven to his own humilia-

tion, I must take this time to remind her she had not kissed me this morning.

She started back in amazement, so well I remember it; the sword and belt in one hand, and the pistols gathered up in her apron.

"Kissed me," she repeated, gaping, "the man is mad. I give you some precepts for your good, and you answer that I have not kissed you. Shall I put down these weapons and throw my arms round your neck now, or would you have a more public prospect still. Begone!" says she, shutting the wicket between us, "or I shall loose my tongue upon you. 'T is my own fault for spoiling you, and turning an indifferent servant into a loutish lover."

I was thunderstruck at her mood, and dared not utter another word. It seemed I stood in one of those Switzer valleys where a loud cry will unfasten a snow avalanche and bring it crashing down the mountain side.

"Mind," says she, when I was up on the horse, "ye are to keep a civil tongue to Captain Gideon."

"Are you a fool?" says I, furiously and rudely, gathering up the reins, "you take away my weapons and then bid me be civil. Why, of course I must be civil now for my own sake, however well 't would suit you to see my bloody corpse brought home across the cantle."

I could not see the expression on her face, for she kept it shaded with her hand. She was still standing thus gazing after me, when I looked back before the turn in the road.

When I came at last to the town my sad spirits got no rouse from my reception there. The men were at work, but the little lads flung stones at me

or pointing their fingers at me, made the noise of a pistol exploding; the women that were upon the street cuddling their children, called shrilly after me that Gideon was come back; from which I might gather his aversion to me was kept no secret, nor his resolution to restrain me, with other insults that I heeded not, yet they made my heart the heavier too, like rain driving into the face of a defeated and dispirited man.

The Captain's house stood on the farther end of Summerfield, away from the most of the houses and the town lawn, with an aloofness that was perhaps intentioned, as of a leader that stood nighest the wilderness through which he would lead them. There was a deal of stray forest left about it, and 't was built not of boards but squared logs as strong as the fort. Some Indians were squatted in the porch smoking their pipes: as autumn advanced these people were drifting back from the seashore. Hunting and fishing, these are the planets that govern the tide of their ebb and flow, with war now and then for a tempest and hurricane.

I was amazed at the order and propriety of Gideon's dwelling, though but a story high; yet there was upon looking closer an uncouthness, a barbarity in all its equipment and furniture, as though the man would say: "This is but a shelter from snows and storms; my home is in the forest which whispereth at my door; under the stars that missing me o' nights peep in to seek me through my uncurtained window;" or so I fancied it. The floors were covered in deer-skins and bear skins; over the doors and along the walls were stuck great antlered heads and masks of wolves and foxes, with racks of arms both Indian and

civilised: there were raw skins too, pegged out to dry on the outer walls. What furniture there was, 't was of the rudest and heaviest, such little things as baskets and boxes were of the Indian reed ware. Here was a man, one would guess, quite done with the old world; not keeping any ensnaring relics and mementoes of it idly around him, but eager to taste the roughness of the new, and preferring such poor equipment as its savagery could supply him. I saw no books nor pictures, whether he came of a mean family that have not or value not such heirlooms I knew not, but have heard since he was of a good strain but sinister nativity, and it may be (I surmise it with a strange pang of the heart that ever attends my recollection of the man), it may be I say, 't was this very stigma and shame, I mean in his heart, for 't was not known nor whispered in the settlement, that did so drive him to the company of wild creatures and salvages, amongst whom the infraction that gave him his birth is blameless. I am but an ill hater (as perhaps an ill lover) and unbent to lasting enmities. Me seemeth there is some spring of pity and yearning in my heart, never quite choked or dried up, that quickly and surely extinguisheth anger or revenge. Such a tragedy appears all human life to me, so mournful a document every human heart, were the truth of it known as it knoweth its own sorrow, that I can never find it in mine own to add unto its burden. No matter what wrong it hath done me, in its own destiny I see it sufficiently punished, and the malice it discharges upon me, only an outpouring and discharge of its own misery, transformed in the distribution, as from a heavy cloud water gushes forth and reaches the earth in snow or hail. I must be

the more merciful then, as I am the wiser. He that was all knowledge was all pity too. Neither let it be objected to me here again, as so oft, that I am a callous man because those smartful catastrophes and sharp surprises, that like a dry pungent powder upon the air bring tears to others' eyes, leave mine dry. Why, I see all such things of a piece: they were expected by me, they were handselled by me: I wept my eyes dry for them the day I learned their inevitance; ye would not have me weep again. Some there are who to the end see life as boys a raree show, ever busy laughing or weeping, gaping or scolding, now angry now merry, as the painted cloth slides past the peephole of their vision and piece by piece is shewed them. But that grown man at their sides who hath seen the whole cloth and knoweth it, how sorry a flimsy 't is, what boots it to pluck him by the sleeve and bid him share their emotion?

So I say again, while I stood in this lodge, for the Captain was long a coming, and marked the care with which he had adorned it, stretching out skins on the walls and floor, sorting out bright painted Indian darts by colours and sizes, I had a very lively movement of ruth towards him. Man will to man at times and I had been overlong in woman's company. I saw him on wild lonely evenings of winter, diverting himself by this arrangement, and, I know not how it seems to you, but to me 't was a moving picture enough. What pitiful things, thinks I, will these gauds and trophies look one day, no matter whether their master, heavy and cold, be carried in to his own fireside, stricken in pride of life; or sitteth a quavering old man in the ingle, pointing to his spoils with a trembling finger that never shall pull trigger again, his heart

full of the numb anguish of life's winter time. And I say this, too, had he when he came in to me, put off by however so little, the insolence of his carriage — for even after I had affronted and challenged him, a careless scorn and an eye that passed over me without seeing me, was all his bearing — had he extended to me in his own house even as much welcome as myself would afford a poor Indian hunter that brought me game; then I know, I was in a mood to have asked his pardon for all my defiant words, and clasping the man's great hand, to have besought his friendship. Why did nothing tell him, that 't was not alone a poor slave, but his own destruction that stood before him, wavering and hesitant, able now to be diverted by a finger's touch, presently to be taken by fate as her missile, and sent, hurtling and thunderous across his path to sweep him out of life? What sayeth the Holy Ghost:

“With desolation is the whole land made desolate, because there is no man thinketh in his heart.”

He came into the house-place in his shirt sleeves; he had been cleaning a fowling piece and had the barrel of it in his hand; his arms and face were sullied with the oil and powder. He regarded me with surprise, waiting for me to speak.

“I have brought you a letter, sir,” says I, “from my mistress.”

He held out his hand for it, and dropped into a chair, laying the barrel and cloth out of his hand on the floor. His sleeves were rolled up, and I marked with astonishment the muscles of his arms. A strong man is a pretty sight, be he friend or foe, and I had leisure to observe this one, for he read the letter very slow and thoughtful, knitting his brows at it and

sometimes looking away as though to turn its periods over in his head. Suddenly he looked up at me.

"Why do you wait?" says he.

"To take back your answer, sir," I answered civilly.

"I bring my own answers," says he, "and need you not for my go-between."

I was leaving the room, glad to get off so easy, when he called me back.

"Come here," says he, so rudely that I turned in the door way, but came no nearer. My heart fluttered, for, remember, I had no weapons, and knew not what indignity he might have a mind to inflict.

"What is this I hear of you since my return?" says he, "that you are turned highwayman?"

"Why, sir," says I, "since you are so civil as to bring your own answers, you must please be so civil as to give them too."

"D' ye know I am a magistrate?" he asks me.

"I have heard some noise of it," says I, "but am past surprising."

"And do you think I am going to overlook murder; for this is murder."

"No, by God!" says I, laughing in his face, "I have reason myself to know your aversion from blood letting."

He flushed, but would have at me again.

"You passed the stocks," said he, "when you came by the lawn."

"I did," said I, "and for the credit of your office was sorry to see them idle."

"Think how your head would look in them, Mr. Cavalier," says he, eyeing me with infinite disdain, "next time you go to the glass to comb your curls and stick a rose behind your ear."

"And the next time," says I, my anger overflowing my caution, "that you go to the glass to grease your nose to slip it through men's fingers, think how your own face might look wanting it."

He sprang from his chair and I gave an hasty glance round the walls for a weapon. There was nothing near my hand but some Indian javelins; I hoped they were poisoned.

"Insolent, outrageous dog!" says he in a voice stifled by anger, "back to your wood-carrying ere I kill you with my hands. Come to this town again at your peril."

"We should be friends, sir," I could not resist to say, "instead of enemies, since one of us carries wood and 't other coals."

I think he came after me as far as the door, for I heard him cross the floor behind my back, but then thought better of it. I got on my beast unhindered; there was a little knot of folk round the gate, for the news of my being with the Captain had travelled, but they molested me not. These were gentle hounds and until they were let slip would give nothing but tongue.

CHAPTER XXII

THE Captain rode home close upon my heels, and stayed long after dinner, I meantime prowling around the house like a horse locked out of his stable, and my heart full of apprehension. His visits had at all times been hard to bear, even with my old master's presence to lend my jealous heart security; imagine what 't was to-day. It seemed to me some plot against my happiness was taking shape. That letter so thoughtfully read through (was it from my master indeed? the superscription was hers); Gideon's incontinent ride to our house after reading it; their earnest conversation, of which I could hear the rumour from the chamber wherein they were closeted — all these things pressed upon my heart like a nightmare as hour after hour passed, and I had wrought myself to a humour of breaking in upon their privacy, when the woman I loved came through the orchard to the gate. I ran to her and I think would have taken her in my arms, but that she kept the gate closed betwixt us.

"Richard," said she, "you are to bring out the Captain's horse and saddle my own."

"With the pillion?" says I.

"No," said she, "with my own woman's saddle."

"What!" cries I, "you are going riding with that man."

"Hush! mad fool," said she, putting her hand over my mouth, so roughly 't was all but a blow; "will you destroy me?"

"When am I to fetch you?" says I, sullenly, "and where?"

"You are not to call for me," she answered, "Gideon will squire me home."

"That he shall not," I said, the blood mounting to my brain, "I swear he shall not."

She turned white, but bit her lip, and took a grip of her patience.

"Tell me," says she, "will you do my bidding, or must I saddle the horse myself? I am only a woman; I cannot force you to your duty."

Her gentleness quieted me a little.

"Have patience!" I said, as gently, "go you in. I will saddle him."

I thought I never had seen Mrs. Agnes so lovely as when she came out to her mount. She was dressed very ceremoniously, in a black velvet habit I had not seen until now and wore a wide hat over her cape. Some little curls had escaped the coif on one side of her face, and blew across a flushed cheek, for her colour was risen. She talked gaily to the man that was to escort her, and gave me not a word, beyond a bare grammercy when I settled her foot in the stirrup. 'T would have been easy I thought, say, as I handed her her whip, to have let me know by ever so light a pressure of the fingers that she forgot not our sweet intimacy a moment; that she was the same woman who, not twenty-four hours since lay abed, ailing and dispirited, and would have no arm around her but mine, nor take her food from another hand. Long after they had passed from sight, I stood staring after her with dropped jaw, aghast at the genius of the woman, not alone to act a double part, this is nothing and I should be poorly armed against the

world . . . * to do it without effort and with an unashamed face: that cometh with practice; but to exact respect for this lie, from him who was an actual partner to its falsity, this I think goeth beyond the limits of a sane, normal mind. I have thought since it may well have been this power of self-deception or self-persuasion that secured her good name, for 't is well nigh impossible to believe that scandal existed not concerning us, or that the serpent's hiss was never heard at their Dorcas meetings in connection with our names; but also 't is not too much to credit, that this posture — of a mistress none of the most indulgent — which she was competent to assume when she pleased, ay, and to force me to adjust my manners unto in turn, did when exhibited before others, who knew nothing, whatever they might suspect, so outface calumny and carry conviction, that the snake might hiss, but his fang was turned and broken every time he struck to bite.

Concerning the passion of jealousy, a passion I hold more bodily than spiritual, 't is not my purpose to speak at length and perhaps 'tis nothing for me to be ashamed of beyond the ordinary if I confess that after the Captain had ridden off with my mistress, I searched until I found where she had hidden the sword, and practised at fence with it until my arm ached; or that on driving home the cows, I struck walls and trees at about the height of a tall man's head with such a hearty good will as to make my muscles tingle. What was worse is the bloody mind to which these things served as a vent; never I believe in so short a time was one so thoroughly bent to murder as mine. The insults he had heaped upon me

* Here are some words erased, we know not by what hand.

were as nothing; nay, as I was so vain as to imagine I had answered them quite aptly enough, and, one might say, reached the quick when he had but cried "tocco," their remembrance was rather soothing to my self-love than otherwise. Also, the threats I could well forgive him; such things I knew are rather a plaister to wounded pride than an advisement of disaster, summer thunder out of which none look for lightning to issue. No, no, 't was none of these suffused my heart with lustful fury; 't was because I misdoubted his errand was to steal from me the woman I loved, never so much as when I felt her slipping from my arms; because I perceived that he might ride down boldly, enter fearlessly, where I must only approach with such an hesitance and misgiving, watching her eyes to divine her mood and, like a dog, knowing not whether to look for stripes or fondling, ay, and bear her away from me, as much his prey and capture as any beast whose skin I had seen that morning tacked upon his walls, or trampled under his feet; reluctant yet expectant, blushing as I had never made her blush, watching his eyes as I watched hers, stammering as she spoke to him.

Yes! yes! I swore with an horrible soldier's oath, herein is the difference; this it is, to have strength of body and of will, to be the desired of women, not the desirous. I flung myself on the ground, I tore the grass with my teeth. "Oh," said I "why did I miss my chance this morning? Let God set us face to face once more. I ask for no weapons; I would not have them; there will be no pleasure in the killing, unless I do it with hands and teeth. She shall see the battle is not forever to the strong: nay! cries I, starting up, I will challenge him to-night! there shall be no delayed arbitrament."

I went in to my lonely supper when the black lasses called me, and ate voraciously, I must suppose because there was not wherewith to drink. While I fed, I made up my mind how I should act. They would return late, with what change wrought in her I would not think now; belike they would ride home slowly through the forest as we two had ridden when I was the other, his arm around her waist, her cheek upon his shoulder, it may be she in his arms and her horse led behind them. This mattered most, that I must be in waiting to take him to the stable, and when she was gone into the house and the Captain took up his reins to go, I would step to his side out of the shadows, and, touching him on the knee, would say:

“Sir Captain! a word with you!”

There would be that in my voice I knew he could not choose but stop and listen to, loathe it how he would.

“Captain Gideon,” would I say, “two laws there are in this world constant and immutable amid all change of men and measures, the same for the New World as for the Old, the same for slave or freeman, beggar or emperor: these are, the law of God and the law of nature. Whether they consist let us not argue: nay, once the first be broke, the greater need for the second. That law telleth me that what is mine ye may not have, except you destroy me first. To-day you have come down blithely and boldly, regarding me not, considering me not, to steal from me something that is mine, it matters not how it became so; something dearer to me than life, than salvation itself which to defend no law human nor divine can call my hand red if it slay you. Get you down off your

beast! I swear to you I have no weapon on me; if ye still doubt me I will strip myself bare before you as I came from the womb. Such advantages as God hath given you, make the most of, since they are His will. Only of this be sure, but one of us shall rise from the ground a living man, for though the earth was as large again ten times, in all its worlds and continents there is not room for you and me."

Over and over again I recited this speech, practising it with gestures and modulation, like an actor his part. Never in all my life, I swear, have I been so wrought up, so determined upon any deed, as now upon this bestial combat, wherein we were to grapple and worry each other in the moonlight like two dogs; yet as I walked up and down by the gate in the deepening shadows, the ignominy of it all from time to time would overwhelm me, like a gush from a flooded sewer. My thoughts swarmed and ran hither and thither aimlessly, like ants in a ploughed up hillock. I remembered my dead parents; my mother's love and pride in my beauty, for I was a handsome lad, however wars and watchings had marred me; especially I know not why, but especially how she would curl and comb my hair, which was, like her own, beautiful beyond the common of women. I thought of my father's blameless life, of his wisdom and crown of scholarship, worn so humbly, imparted so piously; of my life at St. Omers, where first I learned the height and depth and breadth of the knowledge of God, of my brilliancy and precosity there, and the great things that were prophesied of me; a bishop, cardinal, doctor at the least. I recalled my first year of soldiering, before sorrow, disappointment, and defeat had made me bear my sword as a cross;

when I flung myself into the battle—a straw upon a whirlpool, and thought I went with the whirlpool's force; I saw myself the first day I rode with my regiment in a bright steel corslet, a feather in my helmet, and thanked God, with a kind of wistful vanity, I remember, that a man could be so gallant and so innocent; my first engagement—the sign of the cross I made upon my breast as the trumpet brayed for our onset, the marvel of sitting a great horse at full gallop like a thunderbolt, the mad shouts of the soldiers, the clatter of swords on breast-plates and casques, like hammers on an anvil; the hazards on right and left as we sped, the man I unhorsed with a thrust under his sword arm as his charger swerved; the wonder of being myself a live man at the end. Oh would God! would God! I said, He had let me die then; young and pure, brave and gentle, with comrades to mourn me, friends and kinsfolk to remember me in their prayers! What is my end to be to-night? Vile and abject — rolled in dirt and spittle — my wounds licking up the dust like tongues — grappled tooth and nail — my teeth in his throat, his fingers gouging my eyes, ears torn, nose torn, sightless, disfigured, like a dog overrun by a wagon; a thing to cover over shuddering or leave to beasts, scarcely less savage, to finish tearing. Was I born for this? nurtured for this? taught for this? for this escaped perils of siege and battle, by land and sea, to die at the end, the death of a dog, in a far country, for love of a strange woman?

Suddenly a thought strikes me, like a slap in the face.

“Poor green cuckold,” it says, “for what are ye marching up and down here in the moonlight? Whom do you await? Think you they will come home

to-night? Are they such fools as not to foresee your violence, and to walk into the ambuscade you plan so artlessly? Why, they are laughing at you now; half the pleasure is this; to know that you are waiting here, desperate and impotent, and to tell of it betwixt their kisses."

The thought was no sooner well into my head than I was off to the stables. The horses plunged and reared at my hasty unadvised entrance, but I threw a saddle over the nearest ('t is a thing I have never understood, but swear I saw that night in the dark as though 't were day, nor remembered it was night until afterward I came to think of it), I say I saddled the nighest, and before five minutes had sped, was off down the road to the town, I do not know why or with what purpose, only that I was in a fever to be there, and my spirits rising with every furlong I covered. I had no arms; that very morning you remember I had taken out the pistols from their holsters, but I grieved not for the lack of them. My only concern was to be in Summerfield, and I grudged the slow pace and stumbling of the poor tired beast I bestrode ('t was one of our work horses I had chosen), and jerked him unmercifully with my spurs, for in my distraction of mind I had kept on my boots all day. I scarce could find patience to undo the gate that barred the road this side the forest, and had I been on a more mettlesome steed was in a mood to have put him at the bars and bringing him down, to have broken my own crazy neck.

My intention, as far as I had any, was to have ridden to Gideon's house, yet when I came to the Chapins', which was the nearest of the town houses as his the farthest, and saw the windows lighted, something,

I know not what, made me pull up there, hallooing as if the town were afire.

Some ran to the door, but my mistress not among them.

"What hath happened?" they cry, peering into the darkness, "who calls?" and the like.

"'T is I," I called back, "come to take home my mistress."

"Why, 't is Richard," says one of them. It was Chapin, and I thought he forced the rest back; "go in, good people, and I will bespeak him."

He came down the yard toward me, still peering at me under his hand.

"Is aught wrong, Richard?" he says, with a soothing note as one would use to a noisy child; "is aught amiss that ye call so late?"

"I come to take home Madam Bartlett," says I, "why do you make a marvel of it? Have I not done so a score of times?

Chapin bit on his thumb.

"I think not," says he, "that she looks to go yet, but will enquire for ye. Will you dismount?"

I told him, shortly, no; and he went into the house very slow, as a man puzzled, and devising what to say. It seemed a long time before he came again., I guessed his answer before he spoke. Says he:

"Mistress Agnes sends her thanks for your trouble, but to-night is ailing and will bide with us. This was arranged between the women, but I knew it not, Mr. Fitzsimon," says he, "and must ask pardon for keeping you waiting."

I laughed boisterously, and I saw Chapin wince. I believe he thought he had to deal with a madman.

"You must suffer me wait awhile longer, Mr.

Chapin," said I, "what! do ye think I shall take that message from you? go in and tell her I must have it from her lips, no other; or, wait," says I, as I saw him hesitate. "I will come in and ask her myself; 't will not blast your house to have me once cross the threshold, and your good cheer is safe from me."

"No, no," says Chapin hastily, as I kicked away the stirrup and straightened my leg to dismount. "I will bid her come out; but oh, Mr. Fitzsimon," says he, clasping his hands, and I wondered to see how earnest his face was grown; "oh, Mr. Fitzsimon, for God's sake strive this one night to conquer your spirit."

"Have no fear," says I, loftily, "my manners are my skin, sir, and not my shirt," and he went into his house.

Presently the door was opened, but quickly closed again, and I saw the dear form of my beloved. All the wrath and murder went out from my heart; there was no room for it, so full of love and yearning did it turn at sight of that dear shape. 'Twas as though wandering for hours through some trackless forest in search of her, yet hopeless ever again to find her living, shuddering as I harkened the roars and yells of beasts, and looking each moment for some awful testimony at my feet, of a sudden safe, and warm and breathing, I should find her in my arms. I was off my horse in a moment, and had her folded in a close embrace; she repulsed me, yet gently, glancing fearfully back at the house she had left.

"What is it Richard," she whispered, "why come ye to-night, so hardily, to your own destruction?"

"No, no," says I, "not to my destruction, but to your saving. Listen! you must get your horse and

come home with me. You have wit enough to frame some excuse that shall stop their tongues."

"You are mad," she answered, yet I marked well she trembled too, and was mastered, and 't is impossible to say what a secret exaltation I had at this evidence.

"No matter," I told her, "to-night my madness must be guide to your wit, so get you ready quickly for your ride; else," says I, and then stopped; 't was hard to find words for what was in my heart concerning the other man. That were fitter relieved by a roar or howl as of a wild beast. I was come now unto a primal instinct for which words were never framed.

"Else what?" said she, leaning back against my arm, her hands raised to her temples as though ready to cover her ears from an obscenity.

"Else," says I, "I go within door and kill the man who fetched you away this forenoon."

It seemed but a poor inadequate thing to say after all; yet, when one hath said "kill," what can one say more? When one hath slain, what more to do? I am sure there are hatreds that would exact more, to which death is as a door slammed in the face of their pursuit.

"THE STORY OF THE FLORENTINE."

I remember a dreadful tale when I was a schoolboy, of a Florentine gentleman that had a rival whom he hated out of all measure. This was a godly pious man, that for conscience sake alone, for he was a brave soldier, would not be drawn into any private quarrel. Wherefore when this spawn of Satan had upon diverse occasions provoked him

and affronted him to no purpose, there comes to him a friend, saying:

"Why waste you your bile and spleen, seeking to draw this man on to an encounter, in which design you never will succeed, and already have all Florence laughing at you for your pains. Stand here by me," says he, for 't was market day, "and I will point out to you as they pass, an hundred broken men, who for ten scudi will thrust a dagger into your incubus and rid you of him forever."

"Why," says the other, "you speak like a fool. What satisfaction think you, shall I have in making a saint of this accursed dog, and sending him into heaven before his time?"

"I see," says the other, "not content with the man's body, you would have his soul as well."

"Ay, that would I," replies the wicked gentleman.

"Tell me," says his friend, who was a more subtle man, and besides had some private grudges toward the officer; "tell me," says he, "if I can bring the affair round to your wishes, are ye content to leave means and management to me?"

"Not only so," declares the other, "but if you succeed, the half my estate is too little to repay you."

Some few days afterward, late at night, as the officer was returning from the Signory, where he had been on duty, unto his lodging, he sees in a street nigh the river which he must pass, three fellows mishandling an handsome woman, who resisteth them, crying very lively when she espied him. "Help! help! good sir; for the love of Christ, help!" to whom the officer, a stout ready fellow, quickly sped and delivered her, putting the three ruffians to flight so easily as might have made a wiser man (as myself)

thoughtful, yet this was a simpleton as the event sheweth. The poor lady lay on the ground, bemoaning herself.

"What, madam!" says the soldier, "are ye wounded?"

"Indeed I am hurt, good sir," she tells him, "in the foot: I have turned my ankle resisting these rogues; yet," says she, "would some good soul assist me, might reach home, for my lodging is near by."

The officer liked this not and was for calling the watch; yet as the lady entreated him not, for, said she: "It misdoubts me, I am the victim of an official vengeance!" I say, in the end he carried her, being a very powerful man, to her apartment hard by, which no sooner reached, than with arms laid along his neck, calling him her gallant preserver, and the like women's wiles and flatteries, she prevailed upon him to abide with her.

Early in the morning, as the gentleman is leaving her, heavy at heart, as I can well believe, for his transgression, he is set upon by four masked assassins, and with a score of wounds, dispatched upon the stair.

Now followeth the sequel; to my mind even more terrible. Some days later, the young man that had instigated so horrible a cabal, meeteth his friend upon the bridge, gloomy and sad of countenance.

"God's wounds! sirrah," cries he, "do ye go about, still glum, when your business is so happily dispatched? Hath remorse seized upon you like some green lad? With what a puling fellow have I associated myself!" and the like reproaches.

"Remorse!" sayeth his patron, turning upon him a pair of awful burning eyes. "Can ye guess what

thought is at my heart now, like a furnace?" Who when he had told him no:

"'T is because," says he, with a frightful oath, "*be* is in hell and I not there to add unto his tortures. But, by God!" says he, looking suddenly over the bridge as tho' he saw him under the waters, and using a word I may not repeat, "I will follow him there too," and leaping over the parapet was swept away, for 't was the season when the Arno is in flood. By which event his partner was so smitten and terrified, as to make a full confession of his crime, and died repentant, with all who had a hand in that conspiracy.*

Well, well; when I told my mistress I was determined to kill the man, she began to whimper.

"Listen!" said I, "shall I tell you what I had my mind made up to do, if ye came home with him to-night."

"I know not," says she, "belike to kill me as well."

"No, no," says I, laughing for I could not help it at her simplicity, "why should I kill you, poor woman, whom I love so tenderly. Do ye think me a butcher, Agnes?" turning up her face to the moon.

"How can I help it?" says she, "when ye talk so bloody. Had you e'er a sister, Diccon?"

"I have told you, two," says I, sharply, for I saw not why we should speak of these holy nuns.

"And, if their repute and life were to-night at the mercy of some one man, in whose hand their folly had placed it; think," says she, "how would you have him act, Richard?"

* This story, in some form or another, was very current in England during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Sir Thomas Browne refers to it in his "*Religio*," "I believe not the story of the Italian," and it appears to have inspired one of the scenes in Shakespeare's tragedy of Hamlet.

"Say no more," said I; "say no more! you are free of me on one condition. Will you swear to me to stay at this house to-night, and to return home to-morrow before noon, and by yourself."

"I will swear it," she answered, "if you on your part will swear never to come nigh this town but when I give you licence."

"I swear it," said I, doffing my hat, and, "I swear it," says she, giving me her hand. Said I bitterly:

"That is not how we was used to seal our bargains, Agnes," Whereupon with a great sigh, and looking toward the door, she gave me her lips.

CHAPTER XXIII

'T WAS long before I had them again. She returned as she had promised, the next morning, and alone; but when I returned to her after stabling her beast, there she sate, as I had left her, her habit nor hat not shifted, staring on the ground. I went up to her, but had only her cheek as of a cold, lifeless statue. In this condition she remained throughout all of that day, sometimes taking a great breath, as though she would deliver her breast of some hateful heavy thought, anon stopping in the midst of her work and gazing out of the window. 'Twas of no avail for me to ask her what had changed her; she would then only turn her eyes upon me as tho' they came from afar off, and saying:

"Changed? What? no. I am noways changed." Or: "Why, what should change me?" and the like; or tossing her head as if to shake off some irksome memories, get to her task afresh.

It was the misfortune of our condition, I mean as lover and mistress only, that there was between us no common, safe topic whereon we could converse when that of love cloyed or was found inconvenient. Had I been her husband, then, I believe I might have found a cure for all. Then would have been common hopes, common interests, mutual friends, children belike, the daily bread of life, wholesome grain for the millstones that ground and grated each other to pieces with such a fire and waste. Herein is the sweetness

of the nuptial communion felt. Not in dalliance and passion, but in silence and restraint, in patience and trustfulness, in prudence and providence, in all the gifts of the Holy Ghost that God's sacrament was instituted to supply. Matrimony is but an earlier Viaticum, through day as the other through night: the vale of life hath its shadows and terrors no less than the valley of death, and woe unto those who confront it together, despising such fortification. Unsobered and unchastened, see what a child love became with us; how tender to wound and how easy to anger, drowsy at noonday and weeping before nightfall!

When we sate together at supper, alone for the first time after the intrusions of the day, she was watchful for my comfort as ever (this never altered), but shifted her eyes when mine would be seeking them. It seemed to my alarmed fancy that every tick of the great clock was made by a trowel that builded a wall in betwixt us. There was no time to weigh my words or seek the right one.

"Agnes!" said I, "I see well you are angered with me; why do you not be frank and tell me of it?"

"Angry," she repeated, turning on me, with that lifting of the brows and insincere surprise that I foresaw would be a new and terrible torture at her hands, "wherefore should I be angry?"

"I know," says I, "that last night I acted as a man lacking reason. Is it too late to crave your pardon?"

"T is not to ask mine," she replied, "but the good folk whom ye roused and affrighted."

"I want not theirs," I said roughly, "but yours."

"I fear you get that too easy," she told me, "since you never fail to repeat your offence. But let us get

on with supper, 'T is grown late," she says, briskly, "and I must shut up the house and send you away. Our lighted windows will become a scandal to the valley."

Her voice, so cheerful and unfeeling — her refusal to enter upon any discussion of last night's scene of passion — all this boded very ill to me.

"There should allowance be made me," I persisted, "I am so alone, so friendless," my eyes filled at the moving picture (strange, I say, that it should be within the power of our own words to convince us of our haplessness). "I love you so dearly, so dearly, Agnes."

I tried to seize one of her hands across the table, but she took them quickly off the board, and folding her arms across her breast, leaned back in her chair. She had the air, resigned and patient, of one that would say:

"Meseems I must hear this man out, but pray God for a short discourse!" glancing at the clock, too, as is done to jog a loitering guest.

"Why do you not speak," said I, at length, my voice rising at her constraint and silence.

"Good man," says she, "what would you have me answer you. You have asked no question, as yet all hath been reproaches."

"Wherefore do you change," said I, "from day to day, and from hour to hour? You greet me never twice with the same face or temper."

"'T is yourself that changes," she retorted peevishly. "I must each day furnish some fresh proof of my affection; as, one day I must grieve with you, another, dispute with you, another rouse you up and scare away your terrors. If I fail, then, I love you no

more: despair and singing of "fortune my foe." Let us not dispute whose the fault is, but mend it quickly. Luckily 't is easy," said she smoothing down her skirt.

My heart turned sick and cold at her barbarous carriage, but at that time I had a belief in the value of words to heal such breaches, which I have lost since, so must go on like a fool.

"You speak untruly. I am always seeking to discover your own humour, and to follow it."

"You are very like a child, Richard," she went on without heeding me, "that puts a cake to bake in an oven, and will ever be pulling it out to see if it be cooked yet, so that the poor cake is never done."

"No, no," cried I, "but I am like a man that hath no paste, but the treasure of his heart bestowed away from him, and must watch it day and night lest some robber come and despoil him."

I marked her face grow deadly pale, but it did not soften, rather the reverse.

"If by the treasure you mean my poor person," said she, "it never was yours but upon favour, and she who gave it can take it back, since 't is esteemed too paltry a gift."

I now saw the precipice to which I was following her, and drew back.

"Dearest," said I, "I seek no better proof than that which your bounty hath till now afforded me. Come," says I, ardently, moving round to her, for we had both risen, "let us end this upon a kiss. Such mean quarrels debase us in our own eyes and in one another's."

But she would not relent. When I would be kissing her she turned her head, so that I might reach

only her ear. I sought to put her arms around my neck, but they fell, limp and lifeless, at her sides.

"Whatever devil hath gotten into you," said I, presently, in a fury, catching her round the waist; "by God! I will exorcise him."

"No, no, Diccon," cried she, frightened now, "spare me! Oh spare me!"

"Spare you," says I, "tell me roundly, what hath bewitched you."

She whispered something in my ear, whether true or false, I was not wise enough to judge. I have heard since 't is a weapon women keep for their defending. If so, God knoweth, I grudge it them not.

I left her in tears, yet the victory was hers.

The next day was no better, but rather worse. Conjecture, imagination was at an end. There stood betwixt us two some obstacle, some barrier to be overthrown before the old manners might be resumed. It had no shape yet, no form, yet we felt its presence, the one no less than the other; every hour spent mutually was imminent with its revelation; the time in labour with it, and sped heavily. Oh what greedy, presumptuous trespassers are such misunderstandings upon the fair domain of love, what insolent invaders! How quickly are old customs uprooted by them, and old labours brought to nothing. In vain doth reason, doth duty, challenge their title, since in the very desolation they create is their prescription to remain. No wit nor no strength can combat them; they are wilier than the wisest, more stubborn than the strongest. For, say that I was a very foolish man, yet I will tell you in this instance I did as well as the subtlest, that is to say, I could do no worse nor he no

better, since here was I now where skill availeth nothing, providenceforeseeth nothing, pride is brought to abjection and grey hairs to folly;—before the fathomless enigma of a woman's heart.

Yet when all is said, I do not deny that there was in myself a special temper of mind, that, if it did not bring me to ruin, made ruin more precipitate for me than for others; that was, my supreme disillusionment. I have a very keen nose for defeat. I smell it afar off. There never needed for me to tear asunder fowls and make a rebus of their entrails to infer calamity. Disasters never yet surprised me; I am inured to fighting beneath unlucky banners. No man that bullet or pike hath sped to death ever woke so surprised in eternity as myself was to be alive at the end of a battle. Not only do I never promise myself victory; I never even provide for it. Twice I lost my baggage by leaving it behind me on the eve of a general engagement, so sure was I never I would need it more; and, to be back at my story, it must be admitted that upon this issue also I was too tame and mawkish. I should have resisted these encroachments stoutly, and if I must yield, given way to them foot by foot. I had no rights in her, said my mistress: then I should have assumed them, remembering that women admit such things in proportion as they are confidently asserted, and yield protesting. Cheerful I should have been, yet firm; indulgent to her humours, but as concerned her actions inexorable. But why do I go on? Is there any man living that hath not his nostrum for this business of wife management?

What I did in the end was so unmanly that I blush while I relate it, and could not disclose it now, but

that this is a confession, and from the scandalous nature of my office, 't is like I am grown a little brazen in my own regard; for I never did anything so wicked or so silly, but I find since some one hath overpast me in it. First then, I racked my memory to discover what part of my looks or behaviour it was drew my mistress to me in the first place; a sad quest, and not fruitful either overmuch, for so greatly had that period of my love been confused by my scruples and timidity, that I could remember little of it now distinctly enough to be profitable, nothing like so much as I can now in the evening of my days. Memory is a shy dainty quarry, not to be tracked down furiously nor laid hold on roughly by such a hot distemper of mind as mine was now. Yet, what fashions I could recall, I made haste to reassume. I let my hair fall over my forehead that she might put it off with her hand, but she never did; was deft and clumsy by turns, that if I did not win her approval I might at least arouse her temper; there was no constancy in my stratagems. Also, there was a peculiarity I had in my pronunciation of the letter "r," no doubt a fault derivable from my French education; I mean as though there were an "f" or a "v" in it, which preaching hath since reformed. At one time this slur had been an endless diversion to my mistress, who not content with its unhelped recurrence, would set me questions that I must answer by a word that had this difficult consonant in it, or make me repeat words after her that began therewith, and altho' I had been a little ashamed of this defect at the time, deeming it childish and a hindrance to a true appreciation of the matter of my speech, as all such mannerisms are found at last to be, for the woman would stop me

in full course to have me repeat the deformity, yet now I say, I even exaggerated this defect in her presence, hoping for a return of her fond playfulness, until I realised that I abjected myself to no purpose, that 't was a vain humiliation and pleased no longer. For all these devices were vain; darts of lead and swords of lath against the armour of her insensibility.

As I strive to put the matter on paper I find 't is a difficulty incredible and well nigh insuperable for me to fitly describe this woman's attitude to me during the few ominous ill-boding days that heralded the storm. How am I to separate what I learned afterward from what I felt and saw at the time? how in the light of my after knowledge restore the doubtful cozening phantoms of my brain's obscurity then? Our minds lack, I am sure, the faculty to retain such transitory, false impressions in their completeness; somewhere or another must intrude itself the subsequent illumination; as, put some men to tell their dreams, straightway the vision flieth and they fall dumb.

'T is not that she was unkind to me; there was indeed at that time a persistent gentleness in her demeanour and a hesitance in giving me her commands, to which heretofore I had been a stranger. My faults were overlooked; try as I would I could not weary out her patience. The change was no comfort to me, who hungered after the old roughness of her tongue, but I must suppose it seemed some atonement to her, and perhaps, considered her hasty temper and love of order in her house, which these tactics somewhat disturbed, 't was no small sacrifice. She often would regard me now gently and fixedly; that is, I could feel her eyes upon me, yet, turn I never so quickly

I could not surprise them. She seldom spoke save to give me my orders; we would sit together by the hour, but mutely, and, so long as I broke not silence, she seemed not ill content to be there opposite me, nay, by an intolerable discrepancy, her whole behaviour was far more consonant now to the dawn of a tender interest than it had been when first we were lovers. You would have thought us a pair of country bumpkins, Colin and Chloe, at a loss for a word; love at his conception, and not his dissolution. Yet I was glad of the silence too, as an hurt eye of the darkness; there was forever a lump in my throat now that made speech a torture. I have sometimes made a remark, how indifferent matters not, and my voice been so uncertain it did not reach her across the table; she hath bent her ear to me at such times, wrinkling her brows as one does with a sick or faint old man; yet I not able to repeat my words, lest I burst out a weeping.

If these first artifices were unworthy of my manhood, the next did as little credit to my good sense. I resolved, since my mistress rated my services so lightly, she should know what 't was to have a miss of them, so one day, when it came time to rise, turned my face to the wall and lay thus most of the morning. At first I had little satisfaction from it. The men when they came, cursed and swore at finding the horses unfed and unwatered that it was come time to hitch, and questioned me roughly, was I sick? but I answered not and they molested me no further. There was a very great repugnance to meddle with me since the affair of the timber; any man that is desperate enough may have the like respect amongst his fellows for a time; and later, pay for it as surely; but I say 't was no comfort to me that my poor brute

charges went hungry, for whom I had a very real affection, and in these days of loneliness would often take my food to the stable and sit watching them how they ate, sometimes rolling and turning their eyes at me, anon mumbling me between mouthfuls with their soft whiskered noses. Poor uncovenanted servants that share our labours and perils, so patient and brave, surely for them also God will ask an account.

When the men were gone afield, 't was an anguished past bearing to lie in that close dark room, along with my bitter thoughts, hearkening the sounds of life without, murmurs of a world wherein I had no share nor place, how humble soever. "Oh," thinks I, "will fate never have done thrusting me back into these stagnant coves and corners? Is there no chart, no plan which shall show me the course I must take, or else some merciful storm to shatter or rock to founders me?" Even as I spoke, for I said all this aloud to have the relief of words, as tho' she had waited for them, speaks conscience at mine ear;

"You *were* shewed your way; never man so plainly, so miraculously. To the very limits of His power God went to save you, and 't was in vain. The very damned in hell will one day point their fingers at you, making a reproach to God of such a favour accorded one."

Thus I lay, racking my brains for some diversion. The Negro lasses came to the door, but I drove them away. The hound, missing me, scratched and whimpered. Thinks I, "I will go down to the hut where I met the Indian." Not that I looked ever to see him again, but there was a glamour, an enchantment to me, in the place even that had been the theatre of such a manifestation. Accursed ground to all the

settlement, that poor broken garden, where even now a few common vegetables grew, choked amid the giant weeds, was an holy place to me. "Besides," says I, "'t will be occupation; and if I lie here, I shall go mad in real earnest."

It was a bright tempestuous day, and when I got to the trader's hut, there was a cold wind, tearing through the forest trees, stripping them of their withered leaves, and driving those that lay ankle-deep on the ground, hither and thither as a wanton dog drives sheep. Pickosick was covered with the poor outcasts of summer. I leaned on the broken rail and watched them drift past me, how long I know not, since in this employment I found an opiate that dulled the sense of time. Some of them, carried up a little higher on the bank than the ripple could reach again, would lie still in the ooze and scum, wounded wayfarers in the great emigration, but the procession halted not for them. Changeless, remorseless, it passed on, from Pickosick into the Connecticut, thence I fancied on to Quinipiack* and the sea. The air, too, was clamorous with presage of disaster; from time to time a flock of birds would fly screaming overhead, like fugitives from some far stricken field, adding their harsh cries to the wind's recessional. None hath felt sorrow that hath not stood like me, the world around him in ruins and tatters, his own heart keyed to the ill-boding of the autumn wind, construing its cadences by his own sad prophecies and sadder memories; anon hearkening in its crescendo the shriek of women in plundered cities, now upon its minor the sob of some despairing mariner calling in vain for rescue with the watery waste around his lips; oh! I say

*Now New Haven.

what a compass hath the wind for him who hath compassed tragedy. I did not weep, my eyes were dry, but I took an handful of the crisp curled leaves from my feet and held them to my lips, my idle, despised lips. "Oh! ruined pride of the summer's passion," I cried; "tender hopes of spring made vain! withered witnesses of my short-lived love, yourselves have lasted longer; shed vesture of the earth's inconstant fashions, she is less fickle to you than the cruel heart of woman. Well for you," I said; "whom presently the wave shall o'erwhelm, the earth entomb and timely hide you from the icy blasts of winter, from the disdain of an unchastened spring. Alas! alas! for me, who stand changeless amid so much of change, hearing the rout of your defeat go past my ears, my face turned toward the calamity from which ye flee!" The sun was setting when I roused myself and straightened my back; I was chilled and stiff; my belly ached from want of food, and I was fain to gather some berries as I walked back to my poor hut to stay its pangs. How intrusive are these hateful corporal necessities; how they mar the dignity and the grandeur of grief. Food and drink must mingle with our weeping, lest through sorrow we grow like to God.

When I got to the farm house, I saw my mistress stooping with flushed cheeks over a billet of wood, out of which she was trying, unhandily enough, to chop some faggots. There were Indians squatting in the porch, but these would as soon put their hands into the fire as help a woman in such work. The sight filled me with pity and self-reproach. I went to her and took the bill-hook from her hand without a word.

She stood at my back for a while, silently; and I think had a little struggle between resentment and curiosity, which last she had very lively, but not, I think, more than was womanly.

"Where have you been all day, Richard?" she asked at last, yet not harshly nor reproachfully.

"T is my first holiday," says I, not turning round but going on chopping; "do ye grudge it me?"

"Only to know," says she, "that you spent it in no ill company."

"I spent it," said I, steadying my voice, "in the company you have given me for the rest of my life; with vain regrets and hurtful memories."

"That is enough chopped," said she, "are you coming in to your supper?"

"No," says I, gathering together the kindling; "you make my bread too bitter to me."

"Well," says she, after a little pause, "I suppose you will eat when you are hungry."

I turned now, and looked at her; yet, though I believe she had been regarding me fixedly while we spoke; now she shifted her eyes to the river and the setting sun. This was ever the way with us now; our eyes could never encounter but they went glancing off like crossed rapiers. The dog thrust his nose into my hand and stood looking from one to the other of us, whining and drumming on his hollow flanks with his tail, as though he would plead for me. The Indians smoked on impassively, with never a glance in our direction from first to last, the hewn timbers against which they propped their backs not any more wooden nor stolid than they. I remember it all, I am spared none of it, and remembering it, to think those walls may yet stand, those trees writhe

and toss, that river surely run to-day, is not to make the past but the present, the chair wherein I sit, the table whereon I lean, the paper before my eyes, the sombre richness of the still room that hems me in where I write — all phantoms and unreal.

“Shall I have one of the men finish your work for you?” said she, when I was out from the house again. She forebore to follow me in, and be sure I took note of it.

“No,” says I rudely, “while you lodge me my sweat shall pay you. I will owe you nothing. If you are ill content, enlarge me to-morrow. I will go willing; God knoweth my preparation needs not many hours.”

“You are my father’s servant,” said she unconcernedly, but I thought her face turned white, “he hath hired you, and must discharge you. Meantime do as ye please; there is but a woman to contend with.”

I did not think to see her again that night, but when I had finished my work among the beasts, drawn water and cut wood enow for the morrow, and carried in the milk pail, I betook myself to my lonely lodging, and flung myself face downwards on the bed without shifting my clothes or kindling a light. The shadows darkened until ’t was inky black; the moon rose and her reflection travelled across the floor and up the ribbed wall, as be sure I remembered to think it had done many a night of late, unseen, unheeded by me.

About midnight, as I guess (I had not slept) there came a knock at the door which I did not answer, when my mistress pushed it open (for it had no latch) and came a little into the room. She had something wrapped in a napkin between her hands, and peered into the shadows.

"Are ye there, Richard?" she said, and when I answered her from the bed.

"Have you no light?" she asked.

I kindled a light for one of the pine candles, my heart fluttering, yet not with hope, I think. If I had any, I was undeceived as soon as I lit the candle; her face, though full of distress, was full of constraint as well; she had the air of one acting upon a just impulse, but afraid that action may be misconstrued.

"I cannot sleep," she said; and then I saw her dress was hastily ordered, and that she must have risen from her bed to come to me; "I cannot sleep, and you starving here."

I could not answer her. 'Tis a strange thing, but the conviction that her love for me was over and done, never thoroughly had filled my heart until now, when she came to me at dead of night, fearlessly and ungirt.

"Here is your supper," said she, surprised a little, I believe, at my silence, for no doubt she had looked for words, "here is your supper," laying it down upon the table, and unpinning the cloth; "have it or leave it; now I am clear of reproach."

I sprang from my bed as she turned to go, pulled her into the cabin and closed the door with my foot.

"Clear of reproach!" said I, keeping hold of her. "You clear of reproach! Dare you come here and talk thus to me? Because I cannot bring you to an account, must I swallow this last iniquity as well, and approve your self justification! You have made my life loathsome to me, withered my heart as grass; you make me go sorrowful all day long, and steep my pillow with salt regrets, and when the harm is

done, can you brush off the guilt of it thus, as carelessly as though 't were a few crumbs from your gown?"

She strove to keep me at arm's length, and to quell me with her eye, but herein she did me wrong. There was no fear of what she dreaded.

"Say all this is true," said she, "I have come to-night to do you a kindness at risk of mine own repute. Is this violence your thanks for it?"

I let her go and, kneeled on the ground before her, pressing the white hem of her robe to my lips, like a savage, before an obdurate fetish, to which he will pray once more ere he shatter it.

"Agnes! sweetheart!" said I through my tears, "wherefore have ye changed to me?"

She sate down on the edge of the bed, and drew her wrapper round her, as though the words she had looked for were now come, and she must hear them out perforce. This affectation of a sham patience, from the woman who had wronged me so deeply, was the hardest thing I had to bear; a supreme offence to reason, as refusal to plead is the supreme affront to justice. In my despair, I disentombed the thought which I had kept until now, buried at the bottom of my heart, not daring even to contemplate it myself.

"Tell me, Agnes," said I; 't was as though I vomited the words, indeed I had the very sensation of nausea as I uttered them; "tell me," says I; "have you done with me forever? am I never to love you again?"

The moment the words had left my lips, I knew I was a fool to have spoken them. Upon the meekest of us there is no precept laid to help his own destruction, how inevitable soever it perpend. But 't was my fate, though I never spoke in my defence, to mouth my

own sentence; and oh! with what an hateful alacrity, did my mistress seize the opportunity I gave her.

"Since it must be, Richard," says she, "and there's no help. I am glad 't is first said by you. No, I can never love you again in the old way, for 't is that you mean, is it not? I have thought much," she went on, hastily, lest I speak, "I have thought much how I could tell you this so as not to hurt you, or to hurt you as little as may be. Come!" says she, with an horrible face of cheerfulness, and rising from her seat. "You must bear it as a philosopher; for you are one, are ye not, Richard? Now it must help you, else whereto is it good? 't were trouble lost learning it," and the like, of which I cannot remember the half, indeed I think she scarce knew what she said.

"The reason! the reason!" said I, gripping her wrist; "have done your babbling and tell me that."

"My repute," she began.

I tossed my head. "That is as safe to-day as ever 't was," I told her. "If any man can spell love from your carriage to me during the day, I envy him his perspicuity. At night we have the forest to spy on us and naught besides."

"It must have ceased," said she, shrinking, "when my father returned."

"That reason damns you too," said I, "I am not such a fool as not to know that love is hottest at short lease."

She strained to be gone, pulling me with her toward the door, but I held her back.

"Your reason, mistress," said I, wetting my lips "Your reason, by God, before you go."

"Ah!" says I suddenly with a loud cry, letting go her wrists, and beating my temples with clenched

hands. "I know it! I know it! it needed not to ask. Yes! I know what is under all your fine words and shifting motives. Nothing forsooth but this, that I please you no longer; I never pleased you greatly, now I please you not at all. Come!" says I, gripping her arm again, "if you are not a kind woman, be an honest one! is not this it? that you have tired of me? See! your silence tells me the truth—speak! speak! before I go mad! Is not this it? short and simple, plump and plain, that I please you no longer?"

She turned her head slowly upon me, but the face was like a sphinx.

"I know not what you mean at all," said she. "You do not please me when you grasp my wrist so roughly," and, wetting her fingers she chafed the marks my own had made upon her bare white arms.

"Go your ways!" said I, pointing to the door; "go your ways! you have broken my heart."

CHAPTER XXIV

THAT night for the first time in my life, I went to bed with sheer despair for my bedfellow. I had oft enough laid me down with fear and despondency, but this was not like either of them, nor like anything else in the world. 'Twas a physical anguish, a sense as of something not amiss only but gone out of my body, and I have thought since, though not enough of a surgeon to feel sure of it, there may be some actual change in the heart of flesh at such a time to account for it, as engorgement, dilatation or adhesion. It did not break my rest, not nearly so much as an apprehension might have done, mingled ever so little with the divine element of hope; yet I was conscious of it throughout my dreams, and it woke me in the morning. It may seem a strange thing unto many that despair, should be a new experience unto a man by nature despondent, yet, thought upon a little the strangeness disappears. The despondent man is, by the very texture of his mind, kept too near earth ever to fall very far or very sudden. Moreover, his fears, being rather constitutional than founded upon reason, are often stultified and brought unto a happy bankruptcy, so that in time a species of hopefulness must be induced and as 't were admitted a partner in his gloomy prospects. It is so, or was so, in mine own case, and there must be many like me.

But now, I say, there was no room for hope, no room

for uncertainty. I knew the worst; I had suffered a defeat as supreme as death, and had not death's happy oblivion. For the space of a week, or may be two, I lived in despair, tasting ashes in my bread, bearing about my heart as a burden.

'T is not to be imagined that this despair was always of the quiet kind. No, at times a kind of fury would seize upon me, such as, once in a thousand years, may drive a damned soul to the gate of hell, to rattle and shake its fiery lattice. I would kneel down wherever I might chance to be when the fit took me; in the stable currying the horses, on the midden, letting the dung fork fall from my hands; alone in my hut; I say, I would kneel down, and, lifting my soiled hands to heaven, cry out:

"Oh God! the creator and disposer of human hearts and human affections! My Saviour whom I have rejected, my Judge that is to condemn me! Look down upon this poor, sinful, stained wretch, as ripe for Thy judgments as any dried tare that crackles for the torch. Remember the days of my youth, when I remembered Thee, though Thou hast forgotten me. How long I slew my manhood for Thee, how oft I chastised my flesh for Thee, how much of my substance I gave to Thy poor, Thou only knowest Who hast promised requital an hundredfold to those that do it in Thy name. Oh, had I persevered, what a treasure was here laid up for me in an heavenly kingdom, that my defiled hands shall never take hold upon now! Do justice! Thou wilt not, canst not, torture me in this world and in the next as well. Is not eternity enough for Thee? canst Thou not put off Thy vengeance? Though I have sinned, do not my good deeds stand somewhere to my credit? and how hast

Thou rewarded them till now? By prisons, by slavery, by bereavement, by beggary, by a broken heart. Art Thou forsworn? Is Thy promise thus fulfilled? I gave to Thee out of my scarcity, and what hast Thou rendered me of Thine abundance? Do justice, before I die and the flame devours soul and body for its prey; give me my reward! pay me what Thou owest me! Thou art all powerful. Thou only canst turn this woman's heart and desire to me as 't was before. Oh! do it, dread Lord, and thereby requite me for all! I will never ask aught of Thee again: I will be content through all eternity to be the uncomplaining slave of Thy justice in hell; only, turn this woman's heart to me again."

But oftener the disorder of my mind would be too great to frame even so blasphemous, incoherent a prayer (if prayer it may be called) as this. Then I would clench my fists and dash them against walls or tree trunks, tear my hair, lay my head in the dust and cry:

"Oh God! damn me! damn me! so I please my mistress again!"

Once after just such a paroxysm of fury, a voice more devilish than the rest whispers at my ear:

"What!" it says, "do ye marvel? do ye wonder? are ye amazed? How can you look for pleasure or luck in sinning, carrying upon your bosom as you do, the relics of God's saints. The father that begot you, the mother that bore you, 't is they who are kneeling night and day before God's eternal throne; 't is their uplifted hands that cheat you of your passion and thrust your mistress from your arms."

No sooner this conception complete in my brain, than I sought for flint and tinder, nor rested until I

had kindled a little fire of sticks. When the flame had abated, for I wished to have the evidence of my own eyes, and there was a little glowing heart of fire, I tore the locket from my neck, opened the catch, and taking out the two locks of hair that were all I had to recall those who had given me life, not once pressing them to my lips, I dropped them, oh! God that I must confess it, dropped them into the coals, and watched them shrivel away to a little black hard cinder. Then I kicked the fire apart, put the locket in my breeches pocket, and went into the great house.

I know not if my purpose changed as I walked to it; with seven devils in my heart, no wonder, you will think, if sometimes the wrong one got foremost; but when I entered the kitchen, saw my mistress glance toward me quickly, then drop her eyes, as though she had looked for other company, and go on with her occupation, which I remember was peeling and coring of apples to dry and store away in strings for winter; I say, I went over to her, took the knife gently out of her hand, put my left arm round her shoulders and said to her:

“I am about to slay you, Agnes.”

The blood fled from her face and lips as a wave sinks through the sand. She put her arms along mine, yet rather as though to steady herself than to repulse me, and looked at me, with dumb reproachful eyes; such a look, I thought, with a frightful spasm of memory, as she must have worn as a girl, before her husband's brandished arm. I shook her a little, for I thought she was about to swoon.

“Come,” says I, “you wished once to die in my arms. Do you remember it? ‘The best could happen me,’ says you, ‘were for you to take a knife from the

dresser and put it in my heart!" I do only as you begged me."

She swallowed in her throat, but did not answer nor her regard alter. My eye wandered about the room, to the kettle singing over the fire, the clean linen put to air, the apple half peeled that she had dropped upon the table. I tore the kerchief from her bosom, and flung it on the ground :

"I would strike sure," says I, "I would reach your heart at the first blow; your callous, cruel, inconstant heart."

She crossed her arms over her breast and ceased her struggles.

"Why do you not cry for help?" says I, shaking her anew; "the men are without and will come to your call." Indeed we could hear their whoops and whoas as they drove in their teams.

"Oh!" said she, at last thickly, "if you are going to strike, strike like a man and be done. You torture too wantonly."

The knife dropped from my hand and stuck quivering in the cedar floor by my foot. I flung myself upon the table, my face in my arms, and a great tempest of weeping that had been gathering for days, tore me nigh to pieces. Oh! what a fiery crucible was my heart at that moment; what love and hatred, desire and regret, pity and wrath, seethed and fused themselves therein! I swear to you had I indeed struck home, seen her laid along the floor, her eyes glazing, her jaw falling, seen the precious scarlet pulse from her cloven heart go creeping and pushing to the wainscoat like a snake; had I knelt by her side vainly calling upon her, lifted her limp arms and felt them grow cold under my fingers, I could not more bitterly

have regretted the bloody deed, than now I mourned the bloody purpose. For 't was against Love I had lifted my hand; he now lay dead across the floor at our feet. Never would he look out of her eyes at me again, prattle upon her tongue, hide and go seek among her curls. For the illness of a few days, for a week's sad humour, I had turned upon him and butchered him. That tender flesh which I was sworn and bound to cherish, by every law human and divine, laws that sin itself could not invalidate, for they were in the world before him, I had been willing to strike into cold senseless clay, to speed to the darkness of the tomb and to the eternal hunger of corruption. When I lifted my eyes again, my mistress had resumed her task, had pinned the kerchief again across her bosom, and taken up the knife from the floor. Her face was still pale, her lip curled ever so little. There was naught else to tell how great a tragedy had just been enacted under our eyes.

The change that my violence had earned me was quickly made manifest. I have said that until now she seemed content with my company so long as I spoke not, but now, whether from fear or because I had bred a repugnance in her, she so ordered matters that until the end, which you shall hear presently, we were never alone together. It seems impossible to me that she can have believed a crisis of despair so extreme as that which turned my hand against her could ever be repeated; that a woman went in fear of me even for an hour, though many hold them for a lifetime on no gentler title, is a thought intolerable: yet to what else shall I ascribe her manner during those last few days. I often caught her gazing out of window, like a prisoner between bars; she wrote letters and

sent them by other hands than mine, Indians or work-people, had answers which she ran to the gate to anticipate; when our neighbours called, their speech with her was earnest and urgent, and she would be often in tears. I would not eavesdrop, no, not to save my neck, yet once could not avoid hearing her say:

“Not until he return. Oh! wait for his return. That must be soon now.”

Until who return? This could mean none but her father. To what course were they urging this woman, so proud, so self-willed, that she must plead for delay at their hands?

The eve of my last day in captivity broke dark and troubled — gloomy with the very shadow of winter’s imminence. Cold it was not, yet from time to time gusts of wind, shrill and keen as draughts through a crevice, whistled and sang above the bluster of the rainy autumn weather. I was awake long before dawn, listening with a prophetic unrest to the trouble of the labouring dawn. The men came in, stamping and blowing on their nails as of old: their talk was of snow upon the hills, which one would point out to his fellow, like beleaguered townsmen shewing one another the van of an approaching army from the wall-tops.

On such a morning ’t was a comfort, when all were gone afield, to be in the warm stable; and I lingered over my work of clearing out the dung from the cows’ byre, leaning every now and then upon my spade or fork, and hearkening the whistle of the wind against wet ridges and corners, the better to enjoy my present warmth and shelter. There was a little window looked from the cowshed into the stable, over against

which it was builded, and presently, hearing the stamp as of a startled horse, and the chirp of one reassuring him, I stepped to it, and saw Mrs. Agnes in the act of bridling her father's grey mare, which was the only beast left in the stable, for the stallion ran at large. The mare was in a bad humour this morning, and, unused to a woman's hand bridling her, she threw up her head to the full length of the halter rope, and would not be bitted, clenching her teeth against the steel. I watched my mistress's unavailing effort a while and then spoke quietly:

"Why do you not bid me do you this service?" says I, "'t was once part of my work."

She turned on me, flushing and paling so quick, 't was like a jet of flame upon her face. She was dressed for riding, with her skirts pinned up over a knit petticoat, and had a man's hat tied over her ears against the weather. She did not appear handsome, thus decked, but my heart worshipped her.

"I called you," said she, lips and voice a-tremble, "but you did not answer."

She lied, and knew that I knew it, but women are never greatly outfaced at such discoveries. The truth is not in them, wherefore men put aside their lies gently as they put aside their hands, and grudge them as little their equivocation as their resistance. I folded my arms on the sill.

"Where can you be bound?" says I deliberately, "on so rough a morning. You had best let me do the errand for you."

"'T is one," said she, agitated and still reaching for the mare's mouth, "one that I must do myself."

"There was a time not long since," said I, "when you could trust me on them all. Shall I bring one to

your mind. What drug are ye putting into my food and drink, to filch away my memory?"

I came round now to the stable, took the bridle from her hand, and put it on the mare. While I reached down the saddle from its peg:

"Oh!" said she, clenching her hand, and speaking through her teeth, as though she would strain her language by them, "Oh! ye are not a gentleman at all. Were you so, you would not daily and hourly awaken some hateful memory, that my weakness made you a partner to."

"You only took a partner," said I, "because you were driven to it. Thank God 't is such an one as myself."

"Daily and hourly to remind me," she went on in the same strange monotone. "'T is a dishonour no less than if you shouted it off the housetop."

"Come," said I, for I had saddled the mare and now led it forth, "come! let me put you up, and begone to him."

"To him!" she repeated, turning on me, her nostrils quivering.

"Yes," says I, laughing in her face, "do not trouble to lie again. Do you think I am a fool, not to have taken note of your letters and messages to and fro. You have made the rendezvous, be off and keep it. Belike the Captain is not as patient as other men ye have known."

"Oh," said she, closing her eyes and swaying to and fro as if in agony; "to be outfaced, browbeaten thus by a servant. Was ever such indignity offered a woman?"

"Servant!" exclaimed I, the blood rising to my brain, "have done with that word to me! Never

again utter it in my hearing. Keep it for those your artfulness hath hoodwinked. What! are you a noctambula, a sleep-walker? Do ye pass half your life in dreams, and forget them waking? Is there never to be an appeal allowed to your memory? Are ye two women, not one? I am your lover," says I, thrusting my face in hers; "your lover, or shall I use a coarser word. Regret it now if you will, you will never undo it. 'T is a part of us both now, as our lips, our eyes. You shall not close or thrust out mine to heal the reproach in your own. I have known your neck too supple, mistress, to see it stiffen now. Do you heed me?"

She nodded her head.

"Then," says I, "never 'servant' to me again. Come, give me your foot!" I put her up in her saddle, but kept hold of the bridle.

"Another thing," says I; "never creep out again to bridle your horse like a highwayman before dawn. I will do it for you, when you wish, as often as you wish. Our compact is broken, but I would not follow you now, not though I saw you in his arms."

"Let go the reins," she cried, "let go the reins! This hath gone past bearing, and I will hear no more!"

She struck at the mare's flank, and when the beast reared, and would have thrown her but that I held it down, shortened her whip and struck me over the knuckles until I laughed at the pain, when she desisted.

"Before you go," says I, "me seemeth a good time to tell you a little more. I have had much time for thought of late, and see clearly wherein I have been found lacking, and wherefore I am left. All I could give you, Agnes, was a sincere, heartfelt and selfless

love; fearful only because it feared to hurt you; gentle, only not to debase you in debasing itself. Some women there are will still be satisfied by this; some go a seeking for it when 't is too late, as a balsam for their outraged, wounded hearts. But there are others, and you are one, whom it never will appease. Your hearts are too hard, your senses too gross, for it to reach you, and ye would rather that which is double-faced with cruelty and served you with stripes and buffets for its condiment. Remember your own words. 'The bull and lion love best.' Go then, poor woman, seek their love and be at peace! You were the prey of one man's passions in your youth, you must be the slave of another's in your grey hairs. It is your destiny, I could not save you from it."

As I finished, I let go the bridle; the mare, frightened with our contention for her head, and the loud words at her ear, pawed the ground with her hoofs when the lash struck her. Even as she leaped, my mistress turned in the saddle and struck me over the upturned face with her riding whip. She was a strong woman, and put all the weight of her arm and force of her will into the blow. I felt the great weal rise up under the lash, then the pain of it; I threw my arms above my head, as a soldier feeling the bullet in his brain, and fell forward, pressing my face into the cool wet earth like a wounded dog. I heard the thunder of hoofs upon the ground go past my ears. "She will return, she will dismount," thought I, "sure, sure no woman hath done such a deed and ridden away!" but the sound grew far and faint. I raised my head, and saw her pass to the woodland road, not once glancing back, swaying with her horse's motion,

beautiful, desirable now more than ever. My seared flesh cried out for her; I ran after her, calling upon her name, my arms outstretched, until, growing breathless, I stumbled and fell once more. The rain mingled with my tears, the wind with my sobs. I struggled to my feet, and stood gazing out after her until she was beyond sight, bracing my legs as tho' an earthquake rolled beneath them. I kissed the hoof prints that her steed had made; I found a glove that she had dropped, when she beat me, and 't was like finding herself. I pressed it to my lips in a rapture, like some happy lover, dismissed with kisses and promises and given it for a token. It seemed I never had loved her until now. Thinks I, "I will ride after her; to wait until she returns is not to be borne." There were no horses in the stable and I must go catch one in the paddock; I cursed the delay. "Now she will be gone far," I kept saying to myself as the horse sidled up to my hand full of oats. "Now I shall have much ado to overtake her, now I shall not overtake her at all."

Ask me not what it was my intention to do when I came up with her; of this I took no thought. To pursue her, to be near her, to annihilate that distance by which, increasing each moment, my life seemed to be drawn out from me, this was all my concern. I was a little faint and unsteady, my head spun as I mounted, the blow across my face ached and boiled like fire; all my heart seemed to be beating in it. Little by little, too, the pain of it overcame my spirit, the fire died beneath it, then 't was like a ring of metal compressing the flesh; I could not move a muscle, scarce an eyelid, without awakening its fury.

By the time I had reached the town (and I rode

slower and slower as I realised my errand must be an idle one) my courage was quite evaporated. The sight of the people going about their avocations, the housewives sweeping out the dust from their doors, the men plying spade and mattock in their fields and gardens, a boy driving out the townherd of cows from milking, their bells clanging and jangling—all these pictures, I say, were so many affronts to my desperate and uncertain purpose. Had it been night time, then 't were different. There is in darkness an affinity unto all things that find reproach in day, and sunlit hours unkind. Then the naked walk apparelled; branded faces pluck off their masks; despair puts on jauntiness; revenge arms herself and injustice trembles for its lease. To those whom the world crushes under its inequities, as the harrow a toad, there is a relief in night well nigh inexpressible. Then all those busy shrewd brains that devise their ruin are benumbed with sleep, and pursuit relaxed. To the unhappy, no less, there seemeth some pitiful quality in darkness, that redresses the adverse balance of day; as though He who said to the joyful, "Let there be light," left them it for their portion, and established a truce, wherein, with the bleeding sun their enemy, defeated hearts might tend their wounds, ere he rise to battle with them anew.

But now, I say, here was I alone with my despair at broad forenoon, in a cheery bustling village that looked curiously upon me, for though I plucked my hat over my brows, my figure by now was well known, beside the horse (Oh, city of ruins peopled by ghosts! are we also among the wraiths that haunt you?)* my

* A strange misconception on the author's part. But little of Summerfield was destroyed, and that quickly rebuilt.

idleness an offence and a challenge. The thought of turning back was hateful to me, yet no less the thought of remaining on the street, under the scrutiny of those hard inquisitive eyes. Like any wounded, hunted thing, I sought a burrow wherein I might creep from the light of day.

CHAPTER XXV

THERE was at that time in Summerfield a tavern and ordinary, though of the rudest, established in a house over against the fort or prison, but a little nigher what they called the Long Bridge (of trestles), in which, though the whole town was not ten years old,* there was already to be perceived such an air of antiquity as quickly overtaketh any building whose uses have predeceased it. Builded some years before the rest of the town, an Indian trader, that is a broker to the Indians and a trapper, had lived here, both himself snaring and shooting the wild beasts of the forest, and bartering flaxen cloths and beads for their coats and hairs, to the Indian hunters, who beached their canoes below his door. There was at the end next the street a porch or little piazza where the bartering was done, behind it a rough house something long and strait, with a mud chimney at the end, like a great swallow's nest. Inside there was no partition into chambers nor provision made for domestic privacy wherein, as I have said, its untimeliness was plain to be perceived in this prolific village; not indeed that domesticity of a sort had not once existed here, but that having wed a sannap and bred many copperish children by her, this man, a Dutchman, if I remember aright, grew very displeasing to the church elders, and pres-

* Fifteen. The church government was incorporated in A. D. 1637, as appears from diverse accounts.

ently made off into the woods, "away from their silver trumpets," with wife and brats, wherein God knows I judge him lightly, and his log hut was made an ordinary, the keeper of which was also the miller, for there was a mill builded next it of sawn clapboards.

I had seen the place once or twice before, when I accompanied my old master there on magistrate's business, and thought it had an air chastened but cheerless, that the barrels huddled together in a corner for company, shamefaced, like toppers brought to church o' Sunday by the beadle; that there was a comingling of two worlds, disconcerting and a little unseemly; neither did he regard these impressions, which I communicated to him on the way home, as altogether fanciful; but indeed he was indulgent to all my opinions, however extravagant they must have seemed to him.

Even for this place it seems I had come now at an idle hour. There were some "praying" Indians in the porch waiting for scraps to be flung them; in the house none but three or four fellows sitting together at a table, and the miller's wife bustling over the fire with a ladle in her hand. The men had been talking somewhat loud, but ceased upon my entrance, which alone should have been a warning to me. I sate down on a bench nigh the door, thankful for the darkness and shelter of the place. I had no thought of drinking, only to rest a while and presently ride home.

The woman, after many uneasy glances, as though my presence ruffled her serenity, put away the ladle on a nail, and coming over to me, wiping her hands down her apron, asked me what was my pleasure in her house. I told her, not raising my face on account of the scar, only leave to rest awhile.

"This is a place for eating and drinking," said she coarsely, "and not for dallying. Tell me what is your pleasure or else be off."

Her vile inhospitality might at another time have sent me off covered in confusion, but with that weal across my face it hurt me little. Once broken the camel's back, it matters not how many straws are piled upon it. Anything was preferable to facing the street just now.

"Bring me wine!" says I, "a cup of Rhenish."

"Yes?" says she, with an interrogative note in her voice, standing in front of me, her great arms akimbo.

"Rhenish," I repeated, "if ye store not that, bring any you have. I care not greatly."

The fellows at the table were by now all craning their necks to look at us. The hostess screwed up her eyes very shrewd, like my mistress at times, and extended her open palm toward me, scratching it with the tip of her longest finger. There was a low plebeian cunning in her attitude that created in me a physical repulsion.

"Never before," said I, flushing hotly, "was I asked for money ere I drank."

"No?" said she waggishly, "belike your clothes were once a better recommendation. Show it now or be off, I waste no time with your kidney."

"I have no money," said I; there was a roar of laughter from the table.

"I misdoubted it," says she, "you have mistaken this for a house of free entertainment."

"Hold hard," cries I, suddenly remembering the locket, "laugh not too soon; if I have not money I may have money's worth. Would ye know gold, if ye saw it, mistress?" I asked, bringing out my fist, clenched, from my breeches pocket.

"Ay," said she, "and might know whence it came."

"Fear nothing!" said I, dangling the locket by its chain before her eyes. "Come masters," I called to the group around the table. "Draw near and see. Lands I have had, servants I have had, gold I have had. Fire hath consumed them, blood drowned 'em. Here is the last of all, to be pawned to this proud dame, for enough wine to put out the fire at my heart one hour."

"Hush! hush!" says she, yet her eyes glittered covetously; "ye will have the town in upon us, I will call my husband."

The miller came in, all white and floury, blinking the meal out of his eyes. He took the locket in his hand betwixt finger and thumb. 'Twas a pretty thing, this poor violated shrine, of gold about the size of a crown piece, set round with seed pearls, and our crest, which was a boar pulling a javelin from his flank, graven in the middle. He rubbed it on his breeches and smelled of it like any Jew.

"I cannot buy this," says he at last, looking hard at me, "I am not a goldsmith."

Says I: "I ask only the worth of it in wine, and to sit unmolested." He put it in his pocket. "Sit down," says he, "and order what you will. For this you may get as full as a louse."

For a time, perhaps, while the hostess drew for me twice or thrice, I sate quiet nursing my glass, but taking heed of those who were together at the end of the room, nighest the fire. Two were ancient men that had worked upon our farm until lately, the others were not our labourers, yet one of them I had seen at the business of moving the logs (short of this I had no quarrel with any of them), the fourth,

a lad, was a stranger to me. All the time I had sat drinking, I was unmistakably the subject of their talk, both among themselves and with the hostess, and this so openly that they did not even trouble to turn their eyes from me as they spoke. Such whispered discourses, of which the matter is plain and the manner to be conjectured, are hard to bear patiently. I determined since there was no other way to stop their tongues, to go sit among them. Besides, I'll own there was a little malice in me the miller should not have too good a bargain of my locket.

I judged it best to address myself to the old men, as being by reason of their years, less prone to incivility than the younger.

"Good fellows," says I, coming over to them, glass in hand, "I see you are bent on observance of me. Let me come a little nearer to you, where all can see me without craning of necks."

The two old men made room for me between them grudgingly: 't was a great misfortune of my new place that the light from the window fell full upon me, but I kept my hat flapped over my eyes.

"Come!" says I, hammering upon the table with my glass, as none spoke, "drink up, and ye shall have a round at my charges."

The country fellows looked furtively into one another's eyes, but finished their liquor. Presently the hostess comes into the room. She looked for me first in my corner, and was surprised to see me sitting among the rest.

"Who knocks?" she asked.

"Wine round," says I, "for these good fellows." They all watched her face attentively.

"And who pays?" says she.

"You know well," says I, "that all is paid for."

The woman gave a coarse laugh and snapped her fingers.

"I know naught of the kind," says she, "ye paid for your own slaking, am I to slacken all the town for your gew-gaw?"

"Come Mrs. Spicer," says one of the old men, winking upon her, as though he would conciliate her by drawing her into the joke too. "This is Master Simon's first footing in your house; ye must not grudge us one round in honour of it."

"Ye may have cider then," says the scold, gathering up the glasses, "but of wine not another drop, he nor you."

'T is a ticklish thing to change one's drink at the fifth call, and, I doubt not, much of the mischief that ensued was due to it. But I cared little by now what liquor I drank, or whether Bacchus or Pomona had the libation. The wine I had swallowed was at work on my brain; with wondrous alchemy transmuting an hovel into a palace, bare boards into downy cushions, a settle to a throne, chance-met boors to courtiers. I leaned back against the rough wall; the rain was over, and every now and then a shaft of watery autumn sunlight blazed in my eyes and warmed my breast. Lord! how disappointment, regret, resentment passed from my heart as I drank. What warrant was there in those thirty baffled, suffering, wasted years that lay behind me like some ravaged land, to bid me mistrust the years to come? not so much as in one goblet of wine to ensure me the sheaves of their unsowed harvest. I was young of a sudden that had felt so old, life was but begun for me: what secret joys might it not yet hold locked up for me until my

restless groping hand closed upon the key? I say again, the defeats we survive leave us no lesson, because our very survival of them is in a sense a victory; every blank we draw brings us nearer our prize. Could wit, could strength, could eloquence conquer it, then 't was mine already; such wisdom swarming in my brain, such eloquence poised upon my tongue: such a strength in my limbs, that laughing, I thought, were I so minded I might pull this poor log banqueting house like Samson about our ears. I looked with glassy drunken eyes to right and left and before me at the sharers of my debauch, with a sort of pitying wonder that they could sit unmoved cheek by jowl with a destiny that tarried by them for a moment ere it took wing afar; suffused with a gentle melancholy at the thought of leaving them to their poor tasks, their empty lives, and wishing there were some way whereby I might give them largesse from the abundance of my own birthright. Yes, without one penny in my pocket, nor rag upon my back that was mine own — bound to ten years slavery, of which not one accomplished — lashed across the face three hours since, and the wound in my heart as raw as that across my cheeks — broken in health and lost of soul, not a friend upon earth and God's face frowning upon me from heaven, I could see my disastrous life, past, present and to come, a pageant and triumph, bewafted through golden clouds, to ravishing music, upon what? Upon the fumes stored in a cobwebbed barrel! upon the froth trodden out by a peasant's bare filthy feet for a penny a day!

The country fellows did not speak for a long time, but after their drink was brought them and they had

pledged me once, sate holding their pots with both hands, and staring upon them. I had indeed stopped their tongues and stricken them dumb with amazement by coming in among them, but for any welcome I saw I might look in vain.

One of the older men at last broke silence, taking a pull at his cider and looking round at his mates.

"Holiday seasons, master," says he, wagging his head, a little reproachful yet indulgent too, since he was involved in the festivities, "holiday seasons, for sure."

"Well!" says I, waking from my dream with a start that seemed to jar the brain, "have I not earned them? Did I not work hard enough through harvest?"

"No offence, master," says the gaffer; 't is a miserable thing to confess but even this dubious title of respect, earned me by the drink, was as music in my ears. "Ye work hard enow, God knoweth."

"Not alone by day," chimes in the second, "not alone by day. Some report Master Simon, that late at night, when us common folk are abed, ye do go spurring over country on a mettlesome steed with a great sword stuck by your side."

The old men shook their heads together, while the younger ones grinned into their pots. I would I could give an indication of the barbarous dialect common to all, but 't is past the power of orthography.

"I suppose now, Master Simon," says the first speaker, edging nearer with a great air of mystification, "I suppose there be matters of state afoot, such, I mean, as us common clay must not be too curious about. Wars and rumours of wars?"

I was not so drunk but that my vanity took a little alarm, for there was a sly roguish aspect in all their

faces; especially the younger men, who gaped as tho' from excess of dismay at these forebodings.

"What do ye mean?" asks I, a little roughly, alas! a little thickly too, "you see me riding on errands wherever I am sent, nothing more."

"This I can testify," says one of the young men, that one which had been among the wood robbers, "by day as by night Mr. Simon relaxes not his vigilance. 'A bullet through all of your brains,' says he, Mates! I tell ye plain, though I be a man as stout as my neighbours, at those words of doom the flesh withered upon my bones."

"Come! come!" says I, affecting a heartiness I did not feel; "this is all past; let us not fall to speaking of guns nor pistols. These are rough, uncouth words and best not mentioned in peaceful assemblies. 'T is from talking of such things men get to handling them. Be sure of this from an old soldier, did the tongue spare oftener to tie hard knots, the sword would spare oftener to cut them through."

"Well spoken master!" says one of the patriarchs, "well spoken; yet this is to be remembered too. We are all of us here, bating yourself, peaceful husbandmen, and you a confest man of blood; 't is a ticklish thing for us to be sitting hob-nob with such inflammable stuff. Such rough hewn men as we be, I say, 't is unlikely that in handling us some splinter of offence stick not in your thumb. Say that I now, an unlettered, unpolished man, by some word offend your delicacy; before I may regrade it, there is a knife betwixt my ribs or a ball through my thick skull. 'T is hard, I say that having drawn us on for your diversion and loosened our tongues with your liquor, we should pay so bloody a penalty for our mistakes."

"Good man!" says I, clapping him on the shoulder, "have no fear. There is not so much as a bodkin upon me to scratch your finger. What, would you search me, ye may."

Thereupon I pulled out my empty pockets, and turned up the skirts of my waistcoat for them.

"And now," says I, "if there be not enough liquor left of the old round, Madam Spicer will fill up again, and let's drown the grudge in a new one."

The hostess drew for us again, but demurred at the noise we were making, and indeed, 't is likely I spoke a little above the ordinary pitch; but that I was singing when she came in is a lie. Instead I was seeking for some indifferent topic, and soon after asked one of the elders, to make talk, when my master was looked for.

"'T is I should ask you that," says he in surprise, "are ye not of their counsel?"

"No matter," says I, seeing that they all pricked up their ears, and not caring to speak further in so public a place, "no matter."

But they would not be fubbed off.

"You are anxious for his return, Mr. Simon?" says one of them. "Ha! ha! I smoke you, you like not petticoat rule; that is the sore, eh!" says he, rubbing his hands and looking keenly in my face, "is that the sore?"

"Doth any like it?" asked a sulky young fellow that had not spoken yet. "I say 't was never meant a woman should set men to their work. I like not women's wages, mates," says he "'t is paid with the tongue and strained through the teeth too much for my relish."

"Ah Ned!" one of the old men tells him, "have

ye not learned a woman's wages goeth like her lips, by favour. There are some will earn more in a day than you ever shall in a year. Is it not so, master?" nudging me, and winking on the others.

"I draw no wages," I said, "all men know it."

"Come," said the sullen youth, "here's a toast for the new bumper. 'A bit for a mare, lads, and a bridle for a scold!'"

"I think not Simon will drink that toast for ye," said my old neighbour.

"I think he will this morning," the woodcutter replies, pointing to my face, from which my hat had slipped. "Simon was made corporal this morning," laughs he, "and I say 't is a damned good toast to wet his stripe with."

"You lie," cried I, rising to my feet as well as I could, "'t was a branch flew back and hit me."

"Aye," he answers, amid a roar of laughter, "and we all know the tree it grew in."

"I forbid you," says I, "to mention the name of any I serve."

"And I say, that for your nay says," snapping his fingers under my nose, "we be all free men here, neither master nor man, good sirs nor good fellows, and my tongue shall run as it listeth."

"Peace, Ned! peace!" interposes one of the seniors, pushing him down in his seat. "You will have us all sent forth, and fined."

"Let him mend his manners, then," grumbles the surly lout, "or there be some will mend them for him."

'T was at this most inauspicious juncture, that the door was burst in, and the fair-haired giant that had offered to maul me in the forest stepped into the room. He had two eggs in his hand, which he laid

down atop of a barrel, and called for a mug of cider. He was a very tight, brisk, swaggering fellow; when he was brought his drink he nods to the others.

"Here 's clean swords and dirty Bible, lads!" says he.

This is one of their favourite toasts: they have the Word dirty enough, God knoweth, and I had found it hard as you remember to get them to soil their steel.

"Will ye not come to the table, Samuel?" says he on my right hand, "we are good company this morning; here is the papist Mr. Pay-for-all."

The man had noted me from the first. He changed colour a little, though he grinned.

"His teeth are drawn! His teeth are drawn," cries the man who had invited him, guessing his thought. "The great captain hath laid aside his arms and is as harmless as a babe."

"I must begone," says I, staggering again to my feet, "'t is noon, and there is work to be done."

"Nay," both my neighbours protested, putting their hands on me to press me down in my seat, "Honest Samuel means thee no harm."

I 'll own it smacked somewhat cowardly to go out so incontinently upon this entrance; yet, thinks I, when I have sate a little longer to shew these fellows I fear none of them, I will be off. I had no comfort in their society. I saw 't was as easy to drown their ill-will in liquor as an eel in water.

"And now," says my patron, taking me by the sleeve as tho' he would draw forth my natural parts for the newcomer, "tell us Mr. Simon, be there many more gallant high-spirited gentlemen like yourself, reduced to the like ignoble employment?"

"If my work is ignoble," says I, "my diversion need not be." I shook off their hands and made to rise.

"For a Cavalier, y' are easy affrighted," says the bully, lowering upon me.

"I came for my pleasure," I answered haughtily, "I stay not for yours."

"Is it true what they report from Ireland?" he asks me.

"Not like to be," I said, "if it comes in an English mouth."

"What is the news, Sam?" they all chorus.

"That every Irishman hath a picture of the Lord General hanging in his closet."

"We hope to hang him higher than that," says I.

"Wherefore do they keep the picture, Samuel?" asks one of the gaffers, seeing I was not to be drawn.

"To look upon now and then about spring time and save physick," says Samuel, and all roar with laughter, as though this old catch were a joke of the most exquisite.

"Samuel! Samuel!" cries my neighbour, choking and his eyes running for laughter, "thou'lt be the death on me yet with thy wags. On that say we'll have the 'Lord General' for the next bumper."

"I'll give a better," says their champion, flushed with applause, "what say ye to this?" lifting his mug, and looking at me. "The Pope in the pillory and the devil pelting him with priests."

I turned icy cold with rage, for I have ever felt an insult to my religion beyond aught else, even the point of honour, and there was a little self-reproach mingled with my anger that made it the more set on satisfaction. I drank the toast, quietly, to their surprise, and called

for more. When my mug was full, I turned to the man who had outraged my faith and loyalty. Says I:

"I have drunk a toast for you, now you must drink one for me," and I gave him a very foul one, the first I could remember, that I am sorry to say was common round our camp fires during the latter end of the war. I would I could set it down in full, but there will be some grizzled heads still will recall it from this imperfect draft.

"Here's to Cromwell," says I. "May his throttle choke in a hempen string, till his nostril whistles 'God save the King.'" (This is not the toast but as near as I dare set it down.)

"Come," says I, as they hung back, "will you drink it?"

"No," said the bully, "I'll none of your malignant toasts."

"Remember," says I, rising on my elbow and thrusting my face into his, with a little laugh. "I drank yours. I swear you shall drink mine in return."

He got up from the table and leaned back as far as he might for the bench behind, which pinned him in.

"Will you drink it?"

"No."

"Then," says I, "if you will not drink it in your own liquor, you shall in mine," and with a turn of my wrist and arm flung my cider over his face and down his neck.

All got up at once; the table and benches were overturned and we two in the middle of the kitchen, locked and swaying together. I heard the screams of women and the shouts of the men, but saw nothing save my enemy's set face in a red mist. I was no match for him, even had I been sober, but in those

days I was light upon my feet, and made it my object to keep so near him that the full force of his arms could not be used on me. He soon flung me from him, and as I came at him again unsteadily, struck me so terrible a blow in the face that it laid me clean at the other side of the house amid barrels and staves.

"'T is enough! 't is enough," they all cry anxiously, running at me as I rose, sick and stunned, but sober. "You have got your needings, now let it be enough," and the like.

"Enough," says I scornfully. "You shall all know when there's enough."

I slipped through their hands, and went again at my foe, whom none held. There was but one thought in my brain, steadying its fury as a blow pipe holds a flame, to kill him somehow or be killed, not for the blow nor the toast, but because he had called me an Irish dog a month ago at the wood pile. Oftentimes we say we have forgiven our enemies and believe it, yet upon a new occasion the seal which we put on the old hatred will burst, and that overtake and surpass all the rest.

This time I was so far fortunate that all his blows missed me, and I got my hands on his throat. He threw me from side to side as a bear flings the dog that hath her nipped by her nose, but, no less than the dog, I maintained my hold. Finding nothing would serve, but he must fall with me, he took me in his arms, and raised me as tho' I had been a child, to dash me to the ground. Even as he lifted me, I sprang myself from the floor, so that, with my impetus and his own, he was, as 't were overbalanced, and though we fell, 't was he was underneath. I kept my hands on his throat, but felt his arms relax and

fall away. With such force had his head struck the uneven stony ground, I doubted not he was slain. I was glad of it. I believe there is none ever heartily engaged on a quarrel would not have it so, and pushed to the last extreme. Anger unloosed is like an avalanche. He that started it with a snowflake must answer for it doth it overwhelm a valley. There stands but the one commandment, against murder and anger together.

The mist was away from my eyes and the noise from my ears when I rose; and there was the open door, crowded with faces, and the room filled with them too. They surrounded me, hemmed and hedged me in. I saw them as a man in dreams, such an unanimity of malice in their eyes, such a consensus of hatred and greed for vengeance, that the individual lineaments of each face seemed obliterated. I turned slowly round, breathing hard and looking upon them, as a scorpion, ere she sting herself to death, may regard the fire enkindled to consume her. They beset me on every hand, yet silent and passive, seeming to wait for one in authority to voice their will. There were some pulling the man I had thrown through their legs. I thought he moved and cried out. I knew already what voice would speak my doom. I was puzzled, ay, troubled even, at hearing it not. Not to hear it, not to see him, was as though by a figure blotted out of some wrathful picture, all its discord should be doubled.

Presently he stood before me. He had been giving some direction, I think, to those who were outside to make room for us to pass forth. He was girt with his mustering sash and sword—he pointed a moment at me before speaking.

"Is the man dead?" he asked, not looking at me.

There were some in the crowd who told him, no; indeed at that instant, though I saw it not, he was got upon his legs.

He turned to two men that followed him.

"Abner and Holmes," says he, "take the man and bind him!"

"They shall handle me at their peril," cried I starting back, at which there was a fine scurry.

"Is he armed," demands the Captain his head still averted.

They gave him some answer; upon it, the two men flung themselves on me. Either of them were a match for me singly in this brutish mode of attack, and the struggle was very short, though I bit one in the brawn of his hand; in a trice, it seemed, I was lying on my side, a knee of iron planted in my side, like a calf at branding time, while another drew my arms behind me and tied them. Even when they pulled me on my feet I resisted still, planting my feet before me and holding back with all my breathless strength. Such struggles never avail anything, and do but add to the ignominy of our suffering. 'T is ill to strive with executioners, when we are got to that pass there is no longer virtue in stubbornness, yet some will do it. I know of a gentleman in Ireland, our cousin, that, cut down from the gibbet and begun to be disembowelled, sprang upon his feet, and buffeted the hangman soundly for his mishandling; but I say again, I am not proud that I held out, nor that I kicked one fellow in the reins to his letting go of me bawling, and dashed my head back upon another's nose making the blood to gush out, conduct consisting better with a drunken roaring soldier on his way to clink, than a

gentleman and Catholic. Perhaps had the manner of my arrest and matter of my offence been a pitch or two more heroical, the woods a little worthier the consul, I had acted more seemly; there is an horrible property of mean misfortune to filch away dignity. It is easier to give one's body to be burned than one's loins to be caned; still, He who was crucified for us, was also whipt for us. Dear Lord! both the height of suffering and its depth Thou would'st enoble.

Thus idly struggling, half led, half carried, I was pushed and handed out of the tavern and into the street. The crowd outside, chiefly lads and women that had not got in to the ordinary, raised a loud cry, and the boys would have hurled stones but for their fear of hitting the tithing men. The poor beast that had brought me hither, still haltered to the fence, whinnied when he saw me, knowing me even in this rabble, and lacking the intelligence to be ashamed of his master now he was beaten down. They flung me into a chamber of the great fort, bolting the door on me—a vile hole alive with vermin from the Indians that were jailed there, and reeking of their exhalations. In this fort, not a month after, over forty souls, men and women and children, lived for three weeks, eating, drinking and sleeping, tending their sick, bearing their children and closing the eyes of their dead, and I oftentimes wonder did any think of me. 'T was dusk before the shouting ceased in the village, but I was past heeding it. A deadly nausea laid hold on me, my extremities turned ice-cold, my head spun like a potter's wheel and my heart fluttered like a netted bird. I thought: "This is death!" and thanked God for it, but presently retched and grew

easier. The blow I had got ached like a boil, besides the scald of the cicatrice my mistress had given me. My last thought ere I swooned to sleep or death, I knew not which, was of her. Will she go home to-night? thinks I, will she miss me and send to see me? What tale will they tell her, and how will she take it? Who will milk the kine and fodder the horses to-morrow? I woke in the evening, struggling to free my hands. I had dreamed I was back in the trader's pool, drowning, and the weeds enlacing my arms. I thought at first I had awoke in my little hut till I saw the window twelve foot stud from the ground, and smelled the cold prison odours. The rain was over, the evening star just risen, and the town herd coming in to be milked: the low and the jangle of their bells were very sweet and homelike, after my debauch and battle. I had dreamed once of a home myself in this plenteous land, shared with her I loved, where such a peal as this might be our vesper bell; the balm of the fruitful earth our incense, chiming, rising, night by night, in thanksgiving for God's blessing upon the work and watchfulness of the common day. This was my dream; to this it had come. A drunken felon, beaten and bound, and thrust into a stinking gaol, my head splitting, my tongue like a bear's pelt. Oh! what a gush of self-pity and self-justification filled heart and eyes at these thoughts. But the tears we shed for pity of our own woe bring us no relief. As well may we drink the sea to quench our thirst. I was near crazed by morning, and begged the fellow that brought me my breakfast, to make an end of me with his pike.

CHAPTER XXVI

THOUGH this is a country where justice, or that thing they call justice, is a matter of so little ceremony or propriety that they sit to their judging, as to their meat, in shirt sleeves, and have not so much as any fixed time for sessions, which may be holden anywhere, at any time, whenever a quorum of the magistrates are got together; and though I might, an they listed, have been adjudged, condemned, and hung that same night whereon they arrested me, without any irregularity—yet it seems, this having a Catholic and a loyalist within their hand to outrage, this crumb vouchsafed their spleen and cruelty from all that goodly banquet, of hanging, ravishing, plundering, burning, parboiling and escheating which their brethren over in England and Ireland did then enjoy, was a morsel so greatly to their relish, a tit-bit so exquisite, that they could not bear the rough hastiness of their common procedure should lose them any of its deliciousness.

Therefore the magistrates of Summerfield, during the evening following upon my arrest, having, I doubt not, already suborned evidence, rebutted my pleadings, given judgment and established the sentence, saw fit, as I afterward heard, to send messengers to the settlement and farms that lay out, bidding the people to come in and bring their wives and children, for that a great spectacle and holiday would be afforded them on the morrow, when the might and the strength

and the rage of the persecutors of God's chosen people, as exemplified in one bruised, defenceless man, should be finally brought to nothing by the meek and lowly of heart, with bludgeons and stones in their hands, and that five hundred hungerers and thirsters after justice should then have their fill.

Nor, since their religion is the most barbarous and inhuman that hath ever existed since the Jews, could anything fitter have fallen out than that the prime mover in all this business, the president of their bench both by age and office, should also be their pastor and shepherd, the Reverend Mr. Grout.

This was the man that would have had me brought to meeting in fetters, as in Boston, to hearken his eloquence. He was a man of no great learning, neither of the patristic sort, which 't was his office to have known, for once at our house I heard him misquote Aquinas so abominably that 't was all I could do, but that my mistress was by with finger at lip, to let him go on unchallenged; nor were his humanities anything at all to boast of, that theological bee having buzzed too early in his bonnet, though he was a bachelor of Cambridge. Nevertheless he had so great a knack in his sermons and public discourses to catch the key of the humbler and mechanical thought, as, to a tanner he would say, "A heart harder than sole leather that hath been tanned in old oak-bark"; to a carpenter, "Here sticks a rare splinter in the pope's thumb"; or to a sawyer, "These thirty articles are thirty teeth in a sharp saw that shall saw planks to the building of God's tabernacle," and the like, that by all these means he was come into great authority with the baser sort, and had them at his will, the more so that he was also a good farmer; for they

are a rough breed, ill to drive; and though they may be led, will choose their own leader and go at their own pace.

He was a man over sixty, small but well knit and brisk, of a pompous port and carriage; he had an angry flushed face planted with an horrid sparse grey beard, like a dog's lip hairs, a severe light eye, and a fashion of pursing his nether lip when listening, that is common to intolerant men. He was a true Pharisee, greedy of authority and respect, eager for the wafted hat to himself—grudging it to others; not an open champion of the poorer sort, but a fomenter in secret of their envies and discontents, to bridle and abate the richer. Beyond all men, I am sure my old master was distasteful to him. There he could pretend no superiority, there his scholarship encountered a riper, his theology a sounder; before that profound knowledge of life and of a world that had passed, a rich and sombre pageant, before the old soldier's wise and mournful eyes, what was his coarse shrewdness become? Mere hedge row cunning, no more. Oh! I say, let no man feel secure in his own innocence and lack of offence. It may well be he is marked for distinction or destruction only that others may be hurt through his rise or fall; outraged that their authority may be questioned, uplifted that their serenity may be ruffled. Woe to him that ventures himself in the quarrels of the great ones of the earth; he shall become as a straw upon contending whirlpools!

When my prison doors were flung open, and I looked out across the green, I was astonished at the concourse of people. I believe there can have been scarce a man in the two settlements but left his work that day to come and see me judged. All my life

I have had an extreme horror of such throngs as gather around the sad evidence of the law's severity, and would avoid and fly them. Many a time, in cities of the old world, finding myself involved among such a sweating, struggling mob, packed around the implements of death or humiliation, waiting, jumping on tip-toe, men and women, with light, scurrilous tongues, but faces pale as tho' the shadow of death's angel fell upon them—then I say, would I push and cleave my way out from them, my cloak or hand to my eyes lest unwittingly that miserable lost wretch for whom all waited should pass before them; then would I seek the narrow dispeopled streets, to be away even from the shout that should tell me, plain as my own senses' evidence, "He is led forth!" There would seem to be a veil over the sun, and no heat in his diffusion. To see a corpse or a man stricken in hot blood is nothing to me, but to watch him walk tamely to his death, with horrible ungainly motions as though his limbs were disjointed, fallen jaws and ashen cheeks, this I say, is terrible to me, and matter for nightmare.

Here was I now, the prime figure, the protagonist in just such a tragedy. From this one, I might not escape, this one I must follow to its end. 'T was a beautiful morning of fall, as I well remember; the trees stripped of their leaves, it seemed the season turned kinder, as tho' she had been overhasty in her work of ruin and would rest a space. The air was balmy, the skies clear of any but light fleecy vapours. I could hear Connecticut's joyous wash and swirl against the wooden struts of the bridge. I thought of the evening I had bidden my master good-bye thereon. What a tumult was in my heart then;

what a tremendous liberty of choice in my hands, who now shuffled over the grass amid javelin men, shackled and fast bound! A rook cawed overhead; it seemed the devil had taken his shape a moment to mock me. This was the liberty promised me, would I but shake off the yoke of Christ! Let all take warning by me, alike in this world's matters and the other's, the hard road is the safest. Safest! say I? 'T is the only road at all; the other is a maze and a tangle, lined with lying finger-posts, intersected by bottomless morasses and quags, affrighted by lying echoes wherewith its waste places answer our cries of yearning, bewildered night and day by marsh lights and mirages that cloak the precipice, or beacon to destruction. 'T is ruin, I say, of soul and body as well, to be out of the covenant a moment. I did but stray a while, and never beyond the reach of His loving hand. See where I am got to already!

As soon as I appeared, there was a great cry raised by the unbridled multitude; all hated me, and had licence to-day to indulge their hatred unrestrained. The old snarled, women cried shrilly, boys whistled with their fingers, men hooted and mocked. As before, 't was hard to throw mud or stones without hitting the tithing men, which they were unwilling to risk, but one marksman contrived to knock my hat off with a tussock of grass, and when one of my guards dusting it across his knees, clasps it on my head again, some man sings out "Ye do well; put the stopper on the Holy Roman Candlestick." "Hang him!" cries one extremist, their laureate, I must suppose.

"Hang him with a rope
For worshipping the pope."

But worst by far, and what lacerated my heart beyond everything, was the conduct of the women. Men are by nature vile, and I was not even then so unlearned in human motives as to expect aught but its meanest presentment from a crowd already inflamed by lies, and weary with waiting. 'T is a terrible thing to have to say, but true, that in a great multitude that which is good, merciful, wise in each man,—and who hath not a little—tends to be dissolved, to sink, to disappear, yet the vile part to swell, thicken and rise in the heat of the congregation, like meal in boiling water. But from a woman surely there is better expected. She should be all pity, all mercy, no severity in her. 'T is because of this sweet lack, we love to think, that the vindication of the law may not be shared by their hands. In all that crowd which cried, "Crucify! crucify!" we read not of any woman. Pilate's wife besought His acquittal, the daughters of Jerusalem wept for Him, Veronica wiped His sacred face. Well, to-day the women were the worst. They shook their fingers and screamed at me, not alone old beldams, but young mothers with children at the breast, sucking in hatred and injustice with their milk. Young maids spat in my face: there was not one in all that town whose hand and voice were not lifted against me, save only the Indians, whostood here and there in the crowd, such a rebuke, in their gravity and slow majestic motions, to that vulgar brawling rabble as a man must have seen to believe.

It had at first been their intention to hold the trial in the tavern where I had been taken, wherein many times session were holden, but for my case, it seems there was not enough of room here for all who would

be at the hearing, so 't was held in their meeting house, which stood not far off, a little up a hill, and where was room for nearly all.

The magistrates took seats in front of the pulpit, in what is called the deacon's pew, and facing to the assembly, for with these people the pulpit stands not at the side as with us, but in the middle where the altar should be, a fact eloquent enough for them who make a god of their mouths and whose verbiage hath overshadowed truth. A long table or platform was set before them, upon which I was hoisted up with the marshal and one of his deputies, whether that all might see me or to be away from the crowd's rough handling I know not, but give their humanity the benefit. It was a great piece of good fortune for me that their bethel was so cribbed and pestered with high pews and benches, having no aisle, and many of the pews being entered by small privy doors upon the outside, that the crowd might perch themselves to watch me, but could not very well make any concerted and hostile movement; but for this I am sure I should have been dragged off the platform and despatched by their hands during the trial.

No sooner was I up, than Grout who sate in their midst as president of this boorish court, pointing at me with a repugnant hand, says to the marshal.

"Marshal! wherefore is the man's hair not cut as was ordered."

The fellow stammered out that he thought it was to wait until after sentence. By the manner of his reply you will see clearly how farcical was all this parade of a trial. There was no doubt in any of their minds that I was guilty of all they meant to lay to my charge. I was sentenced, for them, already.

"I will not have him here," says Grout, looking to right and left as if to voice the general feeling: "I will not have him here with this shameful head, curled and oiled like a woman's, these locks dropping with the fatness of his abomination."

Not only was my head not dropping with any fatness, but already, owing to my night in the prison, infested by lice, and during the day 't was not the least of my tortures that I might not move my bound hands to scratch it.

I was taken away into a room at the side. I know not what its uses were, only that there was a great chest there covered with iron, which makes me to think even in this chosen land there may be pickers and stealers. My head was cropped, with a little less care than a man useth to shear a sheep, and I was brought back again into court.

Before opening my case Grout put up a long prayer which no doubt he had composed over night while his flock slept (hear ye not the shepherd now, chuckling in his throat as he writes?) Because I must traverse it, I would not be thought irreverent; nay, I say there can not be any man in so desperate a case however, that feareth God, but will be heartened rather than dismayed at hearing his judges address themselves to Him who is to judge all. No mattter what their dogmatic differences, it seems impossible but that upon an earnest request, something of God's mercy as well as His justice must come into their hearts, something of the darkness of error and prejudice be dispelled from their minds. But this man prayed not for mercy but for hardness of heart, not for light but against it.

"Oh Lord!" saith he rolling up his eyes. "Thou

seest us all here, poor plain men, yet informed we do humbly hope, with Thy wisdom and armed with Thy justice. Cast out," prays he, "from our heart all weakness, all unworthy softness that would hinder us in sifting this man's naughtiness or unnerve our arms in chastising it. Cast out," he begs, "in especial all human respect, lest any man, high or low, absent or present, rich or poor, stand betwixt us and the enforcement of Thy law. Let not the hand that sent him nor the hand that nourisheth him be regarded at all in our ruling. Thou hast saved us from the jaws of our mighty enemies, yea, from the lion and bull hast Thou saved us; Thou hast brought us with pillar and cloud into this wilderness, commanding us to build Thee a tabernacle and to plant Thee a vineyard. Now come the little foxes, to creep in and spoil the grapes. Others have had news of the pleasantness of the land, and send before them a spy that may spy out its nakedness. Shall we spare him because they that sent him are great and mighty and terrible lords on the earth? Oh!" says he, working himself into a fury, which quickly communicated itself to his auditory, "Spare us, Lord! spare us this little plot of land at least. The earth is covered with their iniquity and groweth old in unrighteousness; keep us this land of Goshen, our precious inheritance, that begins already to excite their cupidity. Let this man be the last that dares to creep in upon us, blowing upon a ransomed people the plagues and abominations, the chamberings and drunkenness, the lusts and forwardness of the whore of Babylon. Harden our hearts O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so to deal with him that others hearing of him may tremble and be afraid, and their hearts turn to water within

them, and be very loth to fret the land which thou hast given Thy people. *Amen.*"

Notice in this beastly prayer, besides the craft of the man in appealing to the avarice and covetousness of his flock, there was a very special memento to his fellow magistrates that the protection I had until now enjoyed as the servant and chattel of my master, must come to an end; that the security, the common weal of the people who stormed and buzzed at my back, was being sacrificed to this delicacy in meddling with me. These veiled threats, these covert incitements to anarchy, are no new thing, nor was his wit the first to discover their efficacy to work injustice.

I could have told him that so far from a judge or magistrate holding his power from a popular vote, to be exercised or abdicated as a case may offend only statutes, or excite the resentment of an entire people, the very contrary is the case, and their most vital office is this: To stand between the anger and unreason of the populace and him, who, whatever his offence, by becoming an object of the law's animadversion becometh also a client for its protection. The law deriveth so little from the people, who are a weathercock, veered and swung by every gust and passion, that in many a case, perhaps most, it must be administered in their teeth. What was he thinking of, as a philosopher, not to have remembered how absolute, how changeless and indestructible by any time, place, or circumstance are the principles of justice whereon so much of the law's fabric as is worthy respect, is upreared? Of what, as a Christian, to have forgotten how, in that awful trial with which he should have most concerned himself, the people who cried. "*Hosanna!*" one day, cried "*Crucify!*"

the next? At one time I gave much thought and labour to this, how best I might present the evidence which was offered as to convince of its worthlessness, but indeed think now if you are not convinced already there was a plot against me, further pains are like to be lost. What need of them, indeed, in a case like this, where falsehood did not lurk but stalked; where each man gave his evidence with his tongue in his cheek; where the magistrates were accessories to the perjury, suffering each man to give his evidence before his fellow that was to come after, so that the next, before beginning his own fabrications, repeated a little of his neighbour's story, like anthems between psalms—where the interrogatory was not directed to sift truth from falsehood, but to prompt fresh damning evidence. To argue in so contemptible a court is to bring contempt upon oneself.

I stood then, indicted for being, “a rogue and vagabond; an undisciplined and incorrigible person.” To this were many counts: enough to repeat a few of them.

(1) That I did, on the forenoon of the 10th November, when in liquor, assault and beat Samuel Proctor, householder, to the endangering his life, uttering many blasphemies against the magistracy.

(2) That on the 2d October, at Woodsedge on the public path betwixt Summerfield and the hamlet of Long Meadow, I did assault, let, and hinder aforesaid Samuel Proctor, Isaac Eastey, etc. (here follow the names of the others) at and from their lawful work, spoiling their property and threatening them with pistols, so that they went in fear of their lives.

(3) That on the night of 23d June last, being at Mr. Chapin's house, magistrate, I did by froward

carriage and actions intrude upon and overawe several persons (unnamed) peacefully and lawfully thereat assembled so that they went in fear, and ;

(4) That same night meeting with Phineas Cory, marshal's tithing man outside the Fort or Prison of Summerfield, did utter many blasphemies and menaces against the peace of the state, to be hereafter detailed.

Isaac Easty (husbandman), of Summerfield, being sworn, deposed and said. That he knew Fitzsimon from working by him at Squire Fleming's and now sufficiently recognises him. That on the forenoon of the 10th November, being in Spicer's Ordinary with three others, where he had come for his morning's luncheon, the said Fitzsimon came in. He had his hat back to fore, flapped over his face, and walked unstably, very like a drunken man. That he talked too, very extravagantly; he held up a gold piece, he should say a five guinea piece, and said: That was all the Protestant rogues had left to him, but he was damned (saving the court) but he should have a skinful for it. That he sate at a table near by and called for drink several times.

By the Bench: How many he could not tell exact, but should say seven or eight at the least. He had never before seen, nor those with him, a man drink so fast nor so furiously. That during the drinking Fitzsimon called to them continually, dubbing them crop-eared rogues, canting rogues, square-toed rascals, wry mouths and the like reproaches.

Questioned by the Court: He did not offer to hinder or let Fitzsimon because 't was notorious he was a very desperate, bloody-minded man, that went armed, so suffered him.

Grout. Of this sirs there shall be proof coming presently.

Myself. Did I not pull up my clothes for you to see I was not armed.

Easty. Yes, and saw the haft of a great knife sticking in your belt.

Further said: That presently Fitzsimon came over and pushed in among them and began to call toasts.

By one of the magistrates: He could remember not all; there was a toast called for Cromwell.

One of the Bench (I did not know him): Not by Fitzsimon, surely?

Easty. No; that was by Job Creasy.

The Magistrate. It seems then others were calling toasts besides the prisoner.

Grout (interposing hastily, as ever he did when anything in my favour appeared). Why, sirs, surely this is a very proper, loyal, godly toast in this colony, that hath no better friend.

The Examinee. There was a toast called for Cromwell, when Fitzsimon puts a crum of bread in his cup and drinking it said: That there was a crum well down.

Grout (to me). Do ye deny this too?

"No, no," says I, "I am but too thankful for any truth from Isaac, tho' it be but a crum," whereat I thought some of the better sort laughed.

Further said: That presently Fitzsimon went to sleep, when he and others took the knife from his belt. This was the reason 't was not found on his arrest. He could not say who had it now.

Job Creasy told the same tale, also *Abraham Good-year*. 'T was pitiful to see how clumsily these rogues repeated one another's tale, using even the same

words lest a lie peep forth somewhere, but the Bench was very gentle with them.

Sarah Spicer (a voluble woman, but spoke little to the point). She did not perceive me to be drunken when I came in, having her back to me then. That sometimes she drew for me, sometimes the maid, so could not count the cups; herself only drew thrice and then forbade me aught but cider, which she thought did cool the stomach after wine. What she took from me was no five guineas but a little wate, gilt locket. (Here 't was passed up to the magistrates, oh! with what a broken heart I watched them handle and examine this violated holy of holies— this reliquary that had lain next my mother's breast, whose precious contents I had destroyed in my madness!

Spicer (re-examined). 'T was true she had been forbid the Lord's Supper once before. That was not for brawling in her house, but for shovel-board. That Mr. Grout did know these things, for 't was he had gone into the house and caught some at shovel-board and he took the pieces and cast them into the fire and had reproved her (*Spicer*) for promoting such disorders, and had received satisfaction and she was since readmitted (with much else of private history foreign to the case).

Moses Pingree (cobbler), would not be sworn: Said his speech was "yea! yea! nay! nay!" and that must serve them. Affirmed and said he saw the fight betwixt Fitzsimon and Proctor. That Fitzsimon struck up Samuel Proctor his hand and did fall upon him like a lucifer and a catamount and caught him by the throat, so long he had almost stopped his breath; and he (*Moses*) said "this is no good jesting Simon," and prisoner replied: "This is

nothing, I do owe him more than this of old, this is not the half of what he shall have afterward."

Samuel Proctor (that had his head shrouded in a bloody cloth the better to excite commiseration) examined, endorsed all that previous parties had witnessed. When he came into the tavern I was asleep, laid along a bench.

Myself. That is a lie. I can tell you your own words on entering; that was, "clean swords and dirty Bibles."

Samuel (puts his hands to his head very gingerly). 'Tis like I forget a little, folks; I have had a sore rap, whereat many women did cry out. "Ah! poor soul!"

Grout. Let us leave this brawl. I think enough is proven. Do you remember the quarrel at Woodsedge, Samuel?

Examinee deposed and said. That on a day gone a month which he remembers not, being in too great distress of body and mind, but others will supply that were with him, he was one of eight (here he names them) and a boy that led the horse, to load timber on a sled, to repair a dam that was worn by the flood of the river, and about noon, those eight having loaded the sled went away behind the stack to their dinner to be out of the wind, leaving the boy to mind the horses; presently hearing him cry out as if in fear he, the examinee, with others, go to him and see Fitzsimon in the act of cutting their traces, which they could not get to him in time to hinder, but leaping on his horse he drove the team down the road, and rid his own beast upon them, covering them with all manner of injuries, as, thieves and knaves, and when he (the examinee) to quieten him said he would

go with him before the highest magistrate and clear themselves of taking the logs dishonestly, that prisoner drew two pistols upon them, swearing there were two dead men among them whom he was choosing, so that all went in fear and left the sled; and this was the truth of the matter, so help him God.

By the Bench: What said prisoner to the offer of going before a magistrate, nothing but to pull out his pistols?

Samuel. Yes, he said he doubted the magistrates were no better than the others; that he had seen enough of their noses to be sure all liked the same porridge, and he saw 't was share and share.

(Herein will appear the reason I asked so few questions. To ask them was but to give the cue for fresh lying.)

Myself. Was this the first day you were on the work?

Samuel. Yes.

Myself. You lie; the stack was half gone and only a few logs on your sled.

Samuel (sulkily). 'T is thy yea and my nay for that. We did all by leave. Who hath set thee to bridle us?

Further by the Court: He had worked with Fitzsimon in the field. He is a very proud, stiff, high-stomached fellow; he would not sit with them at Squire Fleming's but waited till they had gone, to eat. Had heard him say, not to him but in his hearing, that he had liefer eat his dinner with Grim, the dog, than with such fellows, who sucked upon bones and wiped their fingers in their hair.

Phineas Cory (Marshal's deputy). This was the most lying and most damning evidence of all and worked me the most ill here and hereafter. 'T is strange that the wanton invention of a clown hath

had the power to procure me men's opprobrium all my life and shall scatter mud upon my epitaph. Often it seemeth to me that God in choosing the little to confound the great doeth it with small heed unto the virtue or justice of the cause. Yet His will be done!

Deposed and said: He well remembered the night of the 23d June, that was the night of Mr. Chapin's raising. Near full of the moon was about his duty on the lawn before the fort, when he sees Fitzsimon whom he knew not then but now sufficiently recognises, slinking about in the shadow. Had boots on his legs and a great sword at his hip. Examine challenged him and he (Fitzsimon) answered him nothing, but pointing to the fort asked him 'what is this?' and he (Cory) replying 't was a fort to keep out Indians in case of need, prisoner said, he did wish with all his heart the Indians would break in and ruin the town, and for his part would be of them, and said 't was just so secure a time as this he would choose, and shewed me places in between the yards full of scrub where they might hide and fire the houses all at once.

Never in all my life did I hear such a mutiny as followed these words in the meeting-house. 'T was as though one stirred a hive of bees with a stick. So great was the din, that for a long time no more of the evidence could be taken. Many tried to clamber over the pew rails to be at me; others shook their fists and weapons at me anew; others again whispered the deadly accusation into the ear of such as might not have heard it all. Had I not been upon a platform and well guarded, I have no doubt but I should have been torn apieces.

"Good folk! good folk!" bawls Grout at length, getting upon his feet and waving his arms for silence, "be patient! be patient! justice shall be done you."

When the storm had abated, he bent his eyes upon me with a terrible look, which I returned scornfully, yet could feel the blood leaving my cheeks.

"Do ye wish to deny any of this?"

"Any of it!" says I, licking my dry lips, "all of it. 'Tis the foulest and completest lie hath been told here yet."

"You cannot shake me, master, you cannot shake me," says the deputy, shaking his own head. He had a blissful look upon his face, like an actor before an applauding auditory. The other evidence was plainly procured, but upon this I think he had stumbled by an happy accident, so felt his triumph the greater.

By the Court: Why did ye not arrest him immediately when ye heard these barbarous inhuman words?

Cory (a little took aback). I was sure he was drunken or waggish, sirs. It seemed to me no sane, sober man could speak thus.

Grout. 'Twas ill done not to have arrested him Phineas. "But who," asks he, turning to his fellows, "could conceive of so monstrous and bloody a disposition. There needeth all the other evidence to convince myself."

One of the magistrates (he was a little gentler to me than the others). It may well be the man was drunken then. Did ye notice any signs of such disorder, Phineas?

Cory (with hand on chin as tho' he would sift his memory). 'Tis true, sirs, now I think of it, there was a vinous smell about the man.

Myself. He lies! There went no more liquor into my mouth that night than there hath come truth out of his this morning. (To the witness) Did ye not call me bloody papist?

Cory. No; nor knew you were one till long afterward.

Another (whose name I forget). He was at the raising party that same night. Some of them came out to cool themselves from playing blind man and sate in the road talking, when Fitzsimon came among them, striding up and down and slapping his boots with his sword; the maids grew fearful and all went in.

CHAPTER XXVII

Contains my Speech Before the Justices

THE evidence being concluded, the magistrates put their heads together a while, then says Grout:

"Do you wish to offer any evidence yourself?"

"I object," says I, pointing with my chin to Gideon. "I object to that man's presence on the bench. 'T is an affront even to what justice lingers among you."

All eyes were now turned on the Captain, who flushed to the roots of his hair.

"What is this, Captain?" asks Grout, "will ye answer this mad fellow yourself, or shall I?"

"There is a private quarrel betwixt us," says I, "he dare not deny it."

"There is a quarrel," says Grout, "twixt you and every sober, godly, orderly man in this world, I can well believe it. Nevertheless, 't is by such that rogues like yourself must be judged and punished."

"Come," says I, not heeding his braying, to the Captain, "tell your story, or by God, I will tell it for you."

At these words, one of the tithing men struck me so hard a blow in the mouth with the back of his hand, my nether lip was split open by it and the blood trickled down my chin and dripped on to my waistcoat. My hands were tied, and none offered to stanch the blood, so I must make shift to wipe it on my shoulders or suck it up.

The colour died down in the Captain's face, and he sate, looking in front of him with his hard, wide opened eyes. The man was very short-sighted and went with glasses and 't is a fancy of mine that no eyes are harder and crueller than such.

"There is an old sore," he admits, between this man and me. I had forgotten it until the other day when coming to me with a letter from Madam Bartlett (how strange it seemed to hear my mistress's name in this court!) coming to me," says he, "the man reopened the wound and gave me a deal of scurrilous language to boot. But even now I am unwilling to bring the offence into the present indictment, for it seemeth unto me an unfortunate thing that the least tincture of private malice should be let mar an act of justice."

"Why," cried I, laughing, for I could not help it, "you are not all such conies, surely, as to be caught by this. What matter one indictment so he can have me hung on another? I say, so he can have me at his will, what matter the precise indictment?"

Grout. If ye are not silent, if ye speak one word more, I will have you gagged with a scold's bridle until the end of the hearing.

"Captain Gideon," says he, "greatly as the court approveth your delicacy, yet it seemeth to us, if you will pardon me so saying, rather a strained conscientiousness. The cause of justice," he saith, "as it transcends all private friendships, so must be suffered, I think, to overtide all scruples that arise from private enmities. If this stand a precedent, what mean criminal but by flinging a stone through a justice's window, may force him to the like self-denying ordinance. Come, sir, and tell us what was the man's

offence; no straw so light but showeth where the wind steereth; let us see if this one set in the same direction."

The Captain bowed right and left to the court.

"I have too much by your kind leaves," says he, "to deny ought to your wills. 'Tis four months then, that being at the house of Colonel Fleming, our worthy brother, whose too continued absence from this settlement, so greatly beholden to him, I with you all deplore,—arriving at his house I say, by invitation, a little jaded from our exercise, and coming into the house-place, I saw this man Fitzsimon about the kitchen, and begged him courteously to remove my great boots, as I thought might stand in his office to do both for his master and his master's friends; which he first insolently denies me, and upon my rebuking him, yet gently, for his frowardness, he snatches up my sword, which I had laid upon the table and threatens to disembowel me with it. Upon this I will own, sirs, I was minded to chastise the man, yet considering the disparity of our strength, moreover that 't was ill to be brawling in my good old friend's house, I disengaged the hilt from his hand, put up my sword and rode away, and soon after dismissed the matter from my mind, feeling sure that as I had done nothing to earn this malfeasance, 't was likely only to be part of an unruly, turbulent spirit in the man, that I might safely leave his own master to correct him of."

"Wherein," declares Grout, slapping the table, "ye did wrong, Captain, permit me to tell you,—very wrong indeed. These servants that are sent out here for the bridling of their licentiousness, tho' they be at some one man's charge to maintain, are at the

charge of all men, particularly the justices, to correct. There seemeth," he says, looking round him, "to have been an ill licence allowed this man on all hands, that is a very serious reproach upon our commonwealth. I had not thought to find you a contributory, Captain Gideon," he says with the air of an old friend disappointed of his hopes, "Do ye deny this, sirrah!" he asks me rudely.

"Ask him," says I, "were none others in the kitchen, when this happened; only us two?"

"None other at all," answers the Captain, adjusting his spectacles on his nose, and staring at me through them.

'Twas only now that despair of the issue overwhelmed me, because only now I perceived the craft that lay back of all this man's brutality and callous disregard of truth. I could call but one witness in my behalf, and she, he well knew, I would go to all extremes rather than involve in the shameful publicity of this brawling court. 'Twas torture even to imagine her here, upon this platform, pleading for me; to hear the coarse guffaws of the men and worse still, the whispers and low interjections of the women, "No, no," said I to myself, "better death in its most hideous lingering fashion than that the skirts of her robe be soiled among this clamorous, sweating horde"; and trembled far less for myself than that some chance word might yet involve her in my ruin. Oh! self-denying self-effacing love of a noble heart! no less a pearl when ye lie despised and cast into the filth and muck of a pig pen, than when, fitly set in gold, ye rise and fall upon the proud high bosom of the woman to whom God gave ye for her chiefest treasure and ornament. Oh! what a transport seized

my heart with the assurance that, since death was now my portion; 't was death for her sake who had outraged my heart and branded my cheek. To a generous devotion, nothing is so welcome as self-immolation. "Yes," thought I, "welcome, oh death! why did I ever fear thee? Thou shall prove a pleasure greater to me than any my passion hath afforded me. In thee alone can my thirst for love be quenched, in thee alone the dissatisfaction of my heart find peace! As a bridegroom to his bride will I go to thee; thy tortures shall be raptures, thine agonies extasies, thy dissolution consummation, because I endure thee for her." I was smiling, and my eyes full of tears when Grout asked me the second time, had I aught to say before sentence should pass upon me.

His harsh voice dispelled my dream and awoke again all the bitterness of one that hath just seen justice set at naught. I asked him had I leave to speak my mind. It must be remembered I thought my life already forfeited.

Grout. Ye are to reply to the evidence, whether guilty or not.

"'T is well, sirs," said I, "but I see well it matters so little which I say, 't is scarce worth the trouble to pronounce the word. I have seen death too often in men's eyes to mistake it in yours, and know well that what I speak from this platform is as though 't were spoken from the scaffold. Therefore be patient with me if what I say be not greatly to your taste. I have travelled too wide, sirs, as well as read too much, not to know what is the chief iniquity of your race and nation. 'T is this: that being bent for malice and vengeance sake upon an act of murder, ye are never content, as are other peoples, to do it in proper

butcher's habits. For this ye take great credit to yourselves, that ye burn only by law, harry only by law, shed blood by law alone. Ye will still be surrounding your horrid deeds with the trappings and symbols of equity; deceiving your own selves, you would also deceive others, in whose nostrils your law stinks; nay, you will take it very hard if your very victims lend themselves not to the fiction, as you invite me now to do. When Paris, exasperated, tumultuous, rises upon those who would uproot her religion and subvert her throne, and the blind sword distinguisheth not age from lustiness or woman from man, 'Massacre!' ye cry out, and look for fire to fall from heaven and consume an entire people. But when yourselves, as ye are doing at this moment in mine own poor country, drive forth unnumbered thousands in winter time, from their roofs and fire-sides, into bogs and mountains, to dispossess foxes of their holes and wolves of their dens, old and young, sick and hardy, women with child and grandsires bedridden, as your own townsfolk have not spared to tell me lately, to bleed my heart the quicker — why, what is this? A legal settlement, nothing out of the course of law. When a Gerard, crazed with looking upon the prophecies for seven years, fires his dag into the breast of the prime enemy of his faith, what say you all? 'Assassin!' with one voice. Yourselves would have managed better; you would have packed a court and forged an impeachment, procured false evidence, woven your rope and built your gallows, and all by law. A curse upon such law! say I. I will not touch the unclean thing, — I will not appeal to it, though it saved my neck. You have not spared the Lord's anointed, and shall I look for mercy, a poor

friendless man, deserted in his extremity even by those whose chattel the law hath made him. Let that board," said, I looking to the pulpit, "let that board, that Sunday after Sunday echoes to your savage doctrine, ring now with your savage sentence. Set it abroach, sirs, I pray you: give it wind! give it volume! I am ready for a like measure, with whatever added circumstances of cruelty the security of your gloomy forests may tempt you to. I am too old a soldier for death to appall me, too wise a man for your arguments to confuse me, too true a Catholic not to be content to leave my cause in God's hand. Least of all," says I, directly to Grout, "will I appeal to such as you, who are crocodiles when ye weep, basilisks when ye smile, and the devil's chief brokers to bring the world to destruction." Upon this, being somewhat weary and my lip getting to bleeding afresh, I desisted.

"There is much here that is beside the point," says one of them, a plain looking man, wearily, "you do not deny you were drunk in Spicer's?"

I would not answer him. It was part of their plot by confining the issue to such mean points, to degrade me in my own eyes and others; why should I help them?

"Are you guilty or not guilty of what is alleged against you?" roars Grout.

"No! no!" says I, "you come too late with that question. That should have been the first before evidence, not the last before sentence. 'T is hard if your prisoner must teach you your law."

"Take him out," says Grout, waving me away "take him out, till we consider our sentence."

I was led forth again, into the little chamber with

the money box in it; a fly that had been caught in a web when I was there last, still buzzed weakly in a corner of the window. My guards let me sit on a chair; the one that had struck me put his ear to the keyhole and grinned malevolently from time to time at what he heard, the other whittled a stick idly. Sometimes it seemed all spoke together, then Grout's voice alone, or one of the others, again I thought they laughed: at each interval of silence, my heart leaped in my bosom, for I thought I would be called in. "Oh! be still, be still!" said I unto it, "all men must die, and what are you leaving? how maimed, how broken and hopeless a life." Yet the fervour my words had kindled in me continued to cool, no new consideration would preserve or renew its heat; little by little that abominable fear of death which is mankind's chiefest enemy crept over my spirit again like a tide over marshes. 'Twas only now with this ordeal to face, I realised how sin had sapped and weakened my soul's strength; even so a man that hath destroyed his health by dissipation may not suspect it, until some effort find him no longer equal to it as of old. I came near to fainting when the door opened and they bade me come forth.

My judges were all in their places; the people silent. I fancied there was a smile hardly suppressed upon some of their faces, both in the audience and among the bench.

"Richard Fitzsimon," says Grout, "stand up to receive the sentence of the court."

This seemed a word of supererogation, for there was no chair upon the platform, yet if it meant, "stand up straight," God knows 't was well said.

"Richard Fitzsimon," says Grout, "we have all

here considered patiently of your case, striving to put away from us as unworthy our office, all resentment, all heart burning, such as your beastly speeches and carriage before us to-day seemed calculated to arouse. We bear you no grudge for them, we are not swayed one way or t' other by the blast of your mouth. We take it whence it cometh. Your speech is not ours, outlandish as outrageous it brayeth in our ears. Yet for this much we are beholden to it, that as a sick man, be he never so cunning yet to a skilled practised doctor he must in some way discover the nature of his malady, so in these words of yours to-day standeth out plain for all that runs to read, what spiritual malady this is of yours, that will be breaking out into broils as into boils, into tumult as into tumours. Pride, Richard," saith he, "is the root of your distemper, the Alpha and Omega of your unwellness. 'Discover me the malady,' said a noted physician to me one day, 'truly discover me the malady and it's half cured a'ready.' You have done your part, now 't is ours; the draught to make, the pillula to knead, that you must swallow.

"But first as to the nature of the disease itself, suffer me to enlarge a little upon attendant circumstances that render its appearance most grievous, most unexpected in you beyond other men. Pride is a swelling, an inflammation that repayeth gorging; the desire of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life; dainty feeding, costly clothing, soft lying, these are its causes. Coming by fulness, 't is emptiness one would think must cure it. But whereof shall we empty you? whereof purge you further? Here stand you, not a rag upon your back that is yours, a collar round your neck (or should be there),

bound to ten years of labour ere you call your very skin your own, your life an expiation, forfeited you and given the state, no place in our polity for you, no covenant in our laws, a creature upon sufferance, a felon on good behaviour,—such are you, who rail upon our courts, blaspheme the ministry, put pistol at the head of our freemen, revile our hierarchy (here was a bow to Gideon), curl your hair, anoint your body, brawl in our house of sober refreshment, and go a-fishing, as we have just heard, with Indians on our Sabbath. Oh! says he,” casting up eyes and hands, “the inveteracy, the persistence of this sin of pride. What man that hath stood among us to-day and hearkened this fellow discharge his mouth upon us all, will ever again excuse it in himself, upon any ground of well-being or fair consideration whatsoever. See how it breeds and swarms in this rogue, as lice under beggars’ rags! See the very remedy that was given him used to nourish it! Instead of penitence, shamelessness; instead of sobriety, drunkenness and profanity. ‘He that is drunk,’ saith the proverb, ‘is great as a king’; which is to say, in hard hearts extremes meet; the pride of the king in his ermine, the impudence of the beggar in his rags, all is one sin, bred of the concupiscence of the heart. Who can doubt it, that hath marked Fitzsimon to-day, how from the very first he assumed a consequence and a dignity in his ‘trial’ as he loves to call it, beyond what was ever intended, observed his postures before us, how ridiculous, how disproportionate unto the mean occasion of his arrest are they, whose very breath reeks of the pot-house and is evidence quite enough. Hear him, how he calleth upon death as though the supreme punishment of the law were the

least his dignity demandeth, as though there was no way between, no provision made in our law for the sobering such a mad light harebrain, for the humbling such a braggart, the pricking such a windbag! Ye would not come to our meeting-house of a Lord's day," says he, beginning to foam a little, "but here you are of a week-day. You hid yourself from our reproaches; where will ye hide from our correction? You ask for death, and you may have it yet; but at our time, not yours. It may consort with your vanity to make your exit in a cloud of bombast and blasphemy and *Domine in manus*, as so many that share your accursed superstitions have done. Ye have some relick on you perhaps, an eye-tooth of Loyola or one of Teresa's garters (here he used words I may not repeat), some old bone that you imagine shall be your passport into Paradise. Or perhaps you are a nulli-fidian like the man you call your king, and fear not death at all. No, no, we shall see first if your hide be as tough as your heart."

Here he sobers himself a little, and mops his face.

"This is the sentence of our court," says he in a lower key, "this afternoon you shall be taken from your prison and tied to an oxcart. You shall be drawn from here to the place called Woodsedge, where ye assaulted the wood-cutters. During this progress you shall receive on your naked back thirty lashes of a whip, ten to commence at starting, other ten at the wood-pile where you threatened murder, and the balance upon your return. You shall then be put in our pillory and remain exposed to the gaze of our folk until sundown, when some order shall be taken for your good behaviour in future. And now Epiphalet," says he, to the tithing man that struck

me, "lead him away and make provision for executing the sentence fitly and duly."

At these terrible words I staggered and would have fallen but that the marshal men at my side, who no doubt looked for some demonstration, had hold of me in a trice, one by each shoulder, and held me thus until the entire sentence was finished. But when they tried to lead me off, by some supreme effort I loosed myself, all bound as I was, out of their hands, and flung myself on my knees. No man, I swear, that goeth into the Great Assize confident of his eternal salvation, shall be more dumfounded when the pitiless sword of the angel driveth him away to the left of the throne, amid the frothing, howling detritus of the damned. I know scarcely what words I used, it was with difficulty I spoke coherently at all.

"What?" cries I, "stripes? scourging for me? Oh ye cannot mean it! ye cannot intend it! 't was said in jest. Harken to me, I will plead now, sirs, I will call witnesses."

"Stripes! stripes!" repeats Grout, rubbing his hands stealthily under the table and with a look of devilish malice on his face. "Thirty stripes upon your proud rebellious flesh, thirty knocks at the fast door of your conscience. Shall we make them more?"

Despairing of him I turned about on my knees, now to one now to another of the justices, looking into their faces for sign of relenting. One or two looked away and stirred in their seats, as though uneasy at this awful abjection of a fellow creature; but the most stared at me with hard eyes, or like Grout found my sufferings delicious. I think the tithing men noted these last, for they seemed in no hurry to hale me away. The crowd roared and

fumed behind me, and redoubled their efforts to find good places for the spectacle.

"Why," says I, "d'ye think 't is the pain I fear? No, no, one is as thirty, thirty as three thousand. See, sirs! I was ready for death; if 't is my words you fear, tear out my tongue; I will endure all silently save to be scourged. I am not an atheist, I have no relicks, I do fear death—but oh, the scourge far more. Put me now against the wall of your chapel and riddle me with bullets; I will not speak: with my last breath I will own you just; but not to be scourged! See, sirs! I am a gentleman, I was not always as to-day you see me; that locket ye have all had in your fingers, 't was my mother's; that is our crest upon it, a sanglier proper; King Edward gave it us; I am gently born, I have had the King's commission, worn sword and sash. My words, my drunkenness, I own them all vile! I drank only because I was in pain; there is a secret unhappiness I have, none knows of it. See I am repented already, I will make amends, but not the lash, sirs, not the lash!

"Ye pipe another tune now," says Grout, rocking in an ecstasy, "but it cometh too late. Now I see, the devil a saint would be. But we will not mind him yet. When he is well whipped out of you—then your reformation may begin."

"Heed him not, sirs, heed him not," I cry to the others, "surely some of ye are gentle. Oh! hath none of you worn a sword that ye know not how bitterer than death, how sharper than ten thousand swords is the lash on a gentleman's shoulders? These men have lied before you; I was ever gentle and courteous to them, but when they called me 'Irish dog.' I have served them at table, that was why I ate not with

them; I have helped them at field work. Why is not Chapin here? he knoweth me the best; he will go my surety; nay, I will be my own. I am not a beggar as he sayeth; did ye not hear I have a fair estate in Ireland of eight hundred pounds a year that was escheated by fraud; there is a petition in hand now to recover it; then I can pay any fine ye name. Vane knoweth this; Sir Harry Vane, your old governor; he will answer for the truth of what I say," thus I run on, words pouring from my lips, and tears from my eyes. Lord! how abject and pitiful was I; wailing and cursing, praying and pleading, like a drunken harlot in the beadle's hands. Where was the dignity that befitted my breeding, the patience that should evidence my faith? Gone, gone, all gone—chased forth from my heart by the seven devils that had run riot there since my fall from grace, who now, their tenure over, broke and rent, stripped and plundered the house that had given them shelter.

"Not the scourging, sirs," I sobbed, "that is punishment only for drabs and foists, that never was intended for others. Or if ye will not forego it, wait until my master returns, he will be my surety. The collar I wore about my neck he cut off with his own hand. Would he have done this, think you, if I were the light, ill-governed fellow I am made to appear?"

Here one of them made a sign I was to be left awhile, and asked of me, what rank I bore in the King's army.

"I was a volunteer," said I, "throughout the war. Never a penny had I from the King all the time; nay, I was a contributory to him. There are some in good places now that tabled at my charges. Blame me not, sirs, that I was a Cavalier: I have not the art to change my coat, besides that matter of religion:

there could be none of us in the other party did we wish them ever so well, yet I have been well spoken by the Lord General. I was before him twice; 't was himself sent me here, no other; he will not take it kindly if am I mishandled"; and the like. 'T is bitterer than death to confess these things yet it must be done. Since the memory of my sin doth not enough abase me, let that of my meanness supply for it.

"You told us," says the same magistrate, looking sourly, "that you had held the King's commission. What is the rank of 'volunteer?' to me it lacketh in definiteness. What is it Gideon?" saith he, turning to the train band captain.

"'T is a new name, sirs, for an old craft," says Gideon, leaning back in his chair, "when I was at the wars, our English hen roosts and clothes lines complained bitterly of these Irish volunteers."

"To be sure! to be sure!" says Grout, feeling his prey safe again, "now it becometh plain where he got the gold locket, I'll warrant 't is as much his crest as 't is my coxcomb," whereat was much laughter in court.

"Take him off," says he, "we lose time and 't is already gone noon."

Even now I struggled with my guards. I told them if I was no officer in England, I was one in Germany; that I had served the Emperor as cornet; that 't was matter of polity I should not be mishandled, and would be made question of by his ambassador, and the like follies.

At this word of Germany, Grout did indeed call me back, but with such a face of thunder the people ceased their clamour and listened expectant.

"What is this?" asks he, "this is news to us all

What is this that hath slipt out of your mouth? When were you in Germany?"

For all my agitation I had sense to perceive now when 't was too late that I had committed a sad indiscretion. I told him I was there but a year.

Grout. What year was that?

Myself. The year before the English wars.

Grout. You were an officer in the army of the League?

Myself. No, the League was over. I was in the Emperor's army.

Grout. 'T is all one; ye were in the Catholic army.

Myself. That is how ye like to call it. There was store of either religions on both sides.

Grout. These evasions help you nothing. "Oh, sirs," cries he turning to the others, who sate a little puzzled, "oh, had we known this before! Think of the nights we have slept in our beds, unthinking, ignorant what was in our midst; the days where through we have left our homes in the charge of weak women and defenceless babes. Good men," cries he, getting to his feet, raising his voice and waving his arms, "henceforth lock well your doors and gates! Goodwives, guard well your tender virgins! The spoiler, the ravisher is abroad. The vilest, cruellest, the most bloody, the most licentious army ever was God's scourge to a country hath spewed this man upon your shores. What?" says he, bending his terrible eye upon me, "do ye dare to stand there boasting of your crimes, of your violations, of your inhumanities? What new abominations shall we discover in you? Shall we never bottom your wickedness? Why, sirs, this man hath ridden fetlock deep in the corpses of God's saints, been splashed with

their blood to his damned lips before the milk was dry on them, warmed his white hands at their burning homesteads, and to-day crouches and whines before us for mercy. We shall find he is a Jesuit next! Off with him marshal, lay on and spare not. Stay," says he as they led me away, "have a paper written out large and put over his head when it is in the pillory, to say:

THIS IS THE HEAD OF A GERMAN WOLF

Years afterward, while the hue and cry was yet afoot, this paper was sent over to England; years later still, when, forever at fault, at last it wearied and the quarry might creep forth, one that I knew who was all powerful at court (God will be good to her; she was a sinner, but loved much)* brought it me secretly away in her bosom; 't is under my elbow as I write. Ah! since that yellow libel was fresh, what lies have forged themselves and faded! what injustices been enacted! what innocent blood cried heavenward for vengeance! To-day all that tumult is still; all that fire cold. Not more dust and ashes are the hands that wrote my title than the passion which resented its untruth. The head they slandered and humbled, a mightier, heavier yoke than theirs hath fallen upon, and bowed forever. To-day it stoops, but craves not mercy for itself. Above the awful miracle of the mass: in the sacramental silence of the confessional, whither sin and shame creep to bury themselves in the abyss of God's consuming mercy, where such truth falters

*There can be little doubt who is meant here. The Lady Castlemaine protected Father Fitzsimon until her death.

now as shall resound with tongue and throat of brass from heaven at the assizing of the world; over the pallet whence the dying sinner, roused so late from the doze and stupor and cozening visions of life, stares desperately upon eternity imminent, and like any drowning man clutches at the ghostly hands of his last friend on earth; comforting, pleading, reassuring, busy to devise words of hope and good cheer, eager to reveal all mercy, tender to soften all asperity; ignoring injury, supplying unableness; the servant of the lowliest, the disciple of the most ignorant, the brother of the most outcast, the slave of servitude; not glorying nor exalting my good works, which are as nothing; humbly and fearfully, in tears and trembling working out salvation; never more in the unsmirched robes of my baptism, as may some predestined souls, the darlings of God's love; clad in the sackcloth habit of a penitent 't is true, yet as a man may judge and must judge that knoweth good from evil—so I see myself to-day. How have men seen me, see me still?

“This is the head of a German Wolf.”

How shall God see me at the end?

Now I was pulled from the platform, and dragged over benches and rails through the hall. A hundred hands were outstretched to grasp me and take their part in the common punishment. I was buffeted, kicked, trampled, spat upon; the very children took their share; one woman, with an infant in her arms, took the nerveless little arm and struck my face with it. The tithing men were at no pains to protect me, but were content to hale behind them; so quickly, once we were out of the meeting-house, that, having

lost my feet, I could not regain them, but was dragged across the common on my knees. I thought I never should reach the prison alive, but we came to it at last. Its door was opened, I was thrust in, stunned and fainting as a badger is thrust into a barrel for baiting. There was to be dinner before the sport, but some of the people let it go, and never ceased to shout round my prison. The shrill voices of boys in particular would be repeating my sentence of "thirty lashes" in every tune and intonation possible, and 't was a favourite sport with them to pitch stones through the little high window that lighted the prison. I shrank into the farthest corner, my knees drawn up, my fingers in my ears, for my hands were now unbound—feeling nothing, remembering nothing, thinking of nothing, or if so, with that superficial and instinctive action of the brain that takes note of images but coördinates none of them. The disorder of the populace reached my deadened ears like the sound of the sea heard in a cavern, or rather I listened to it as a man, blindfolded, and led out to be cast to it, may heark the swirl of the hungry monster beneath his feet.

CHAPTER XXVIII

I WAS led out to be beaten about two o'clock of the afternoon. The people were much quieted, whether a precept had been laid upon them to this end, or because the sight of the apparatus sobered them, I know not, but there was no more violence offered me, and little shouting. There was a great crowd around the cart, yet I noticed too that they stood at some distance from it, none encroaching upon it nor touching it, and some of the children clung to their mothers' skirts as though affrighted. There was not a man, I believe, but upon licence to do so would cheerfully have torn me apieces in the morning, and not one this afternoon but shrank at sight of the thongs and triangle.

I was walked across the square or lawn with an officer on either hand, and having passed the crowd, which fell away from me, was brought to a standstill at the back of the cart, with the ends of the cross at my feet. The magistrates stood together in the porch of the inn; Grout a little to the fore, having a Testament in his hand and his gown held together in front of him. There was a drummer, standing near by with his drum, and when the boy had beaten a ruffle upon it, my sentence was read over to me again. Then my clothes were unbuttoned, my shirt and waistcoat pulled over my shoulders, and I stood naked to the waist, shivering from the cold wind, watching my executioners' faces, and tottering

hither and thither at their command. Grout steps to the front.

"Before the sentence of the law is carried out upon you," says he, "will you ask pardon of these people for the scandal of your life among them?"

To which I answered nothing. There was a pale declining sun in the sky behind my shoulders; and I watched the shadow of the marshal, sidelong, to know when his arm would be lifted to strike.

Grout speaks again:

"During the first part of the whipping," says he (the shadow at my side moved as he spoke), "I will read unto you certain of the penitential psalms of David proper unto such an occasion."

I never heard them. Not three words were spoken when, like a lightning streak, a bolt from heaven, a whirlwind and a rain of fire, the lash descended upon my naked shoulders. At that first stroke the work was done, the disaster consummated. Truly had I spoken, more truly than I knew, when I said that one was as thirty, thirty as one. 'T was more than thunderbolt or hurricane, 't was an upheaval, an earthquake, a cataclysm that laid my life from my birth until this shameful instant in ruins behind me. I might begin anew; I must, it seems, since life clung to me so stubbornly and suffered me to survive my dishonour; yet to that old life in vain should I look for help, for guidance ever again. 'T was uprooted, erased, as though it never had been; its very foundations were gone; I might not trace them again nor know where such a house stood, where such a fountain ran, nor whereto any path among them used to lead my feet. I was a man near thirty years old. Think a little of the labour, the foresight, the hopeful diligence

wherewith piece by piece the fabric of character had been upreared that made me such an one as I was before the lash came upon my flesh! What temptations conquered, what meannesses eradicated, what noble impulses cherished until use was second nature! This is the age by excellence when with the wheat the tares come also to harvest, to be bound into sheaves and burned away. Then if good seed hath been sown and tended, may a man pause awhile and rejoice his heart with its ripened fulness; then if his intention hath remained upright, what weeds the enemy hath sown wilt and wither away. But for me all was destroyed at that first blow; tares and wheat alike vanished in one infernal conflagration; no help, no hindrance from them ever again.

Take a single instance. I have confessed to you that I was never a brave man, that is, by nature. There was in me, I think, too profuse an imagination, perhaps too sharp a conviction of the significance of death, of the awful issues that depend upon that chance act of dissolution.* Yet true it is, by such a discipline as only God and my own soul knew, I had so schooled myself as to be able to confront the King of Terrors, to feel his breath upon my face, and not a tremor of my lip, not the flicker of an eyelid betray the agitation at my unruly heart. This was not much, you will say: to have come with such pains to what is a natural, unforced instinct in many a clown. Even so, still since the love we bear unto the heart's treasure is proportioned unto the labour spent

*An old comrade of Mr. Fitzsimon describes him as, "in action, of an obstinate and bloody courage." Nevertheless, such is the complexity of the human soul, I doubt not the man's inmost nature stands here revealed.

in getting it, sure, sure I may be pardoned in that I looked complacently upon my courage, and, as I valued it myself, should deem its value to subsist.

But to-day, I say, what was all this to me? To what meaner bankruptcy could cowardice, could ignominy, have come? Nay, deliberately I say this. Could I have accused myself in this moment of them, by so far as they proportioned me to the vileness of my punishment, by so far should I have been comforted. For not only was there no help in the remembrance of what a man I once had been; by an horrible perversity it sharpened my punishment tenfold.

That Richard Fitzsimon, in whose head was such a compendium and on his tongue such eloquence, the very professors would creep privily into the study during our dissertations to hearken him, wagging their chins, upholding their hands in corners, as many a time I espied them: what was he to be? whereto was he bound? what destiny his? To be whipped in a boor's colony for drinking and brawling. That was his predestined end—that the morass of shame into which his life was to wander and be lost forever.

That Richard Fitzsimon (ah! no, not this, not this poor slave, quivering now beneath the lash), he that would ride so gaily, so bravely, apparelled for war as for a bridal, so that there was no count's nor councillor's son in our troop that could outshine him; from whose mouth at camp fires and messes such bursts of song would come, French, German, Italian in turn, and all so carelessly, as a Sultan scatters pearls, that his homestaying comrades would gaze upon him for amazement; poor butterfly, fluttering over bloody fields and toppling thrones, content to

stake life and fortune so you might shake your spangled wings the braver for an hour; here in this dark old forest the web was spun that should catch you, here the grim spider waited, to whom your vanities are hateful, your glitter a bait for his cruelty. Ah! comrades of his brief day of sunshine, could none of ye foresee this end? Would God he could remember that ye had shrunk from him, jeered upon him, laughed him down in his folly. Gaze upon him now, brave soldier souls, that met your death by honest sword and bullet, gaze upon him now! and from your ghostly muster roll raze out his shameful name!

But, chiefest of all my tortures,—ah! who hath loved but guesses it aright? Never is a man's honour so delicate, so exacting, as when he is loved. Then a whisper will trouble it, a smile send it into tumult. There are secret shames, deny it who will, that ordinarily men are content to swallow, so long as there be no witness to them; for honour like honesty may have a false conscience. Yet let him be loved! Behold! he hath a witness at his heart whom no sophistries can confute, a jury from whom all actions, of himself to the world, of the world to himself, must beg a verdict; a judge to whose supreme sentence all things appeal. Is he affronted? then she is shamed through him. Is he belittled? Her favour is impugned that chose him. Doth the world applaud him? 't is a tribute to be laid at her feet. Doth it frown? 't is a dragon to slay for her sake. Of all duels I have known, the bloodiest, the most desperate and unreasonable, were those wherein women were implicated. All other quarrels may be compounded, all other hurts plastered up save this. It hath often

happened that to preserve a woman's opinion which he got by hazard, a man has changed the course of his entire life; what God, and grace, and fear of hell and desire of heaven could not do this happy accident hath achieved. I know when I was a young man, there were many things I passed over I could not have done, had I been in love: as soon could I have taken the sacrament unshriven as my sweetheart's kisses with a stain upon my honour; judge then what a fire in my heart must the memory of my mistress's favours in this shameful conjuncture have been; such, I tell you, as passeth the power of words to express. Her hands were in my hair again, her mouth at my lips; at each new insult of the crowd some loving foolish speech of hers would recur and hurt me far more. "Many are the scourges of the sinner," saith the Word, and indeed I found it so. Oh! say I, what a measure 't is for me of the enormity of my sin, that this torture did not pay for all; that there was more to come.

As for the physical part—that was as nothing. I took my chastisement very tamely, and I think all were disappointed in me, Grout with the rest. He had looked, I imagine, for a lusty roaring devil, that would only be expelled out of me with much ado and labour, wherein, he hoped, his skill as a spiritual midwife might be manifested; the others I am assured, expected a fight with the tithing men before I could be yoked and bound, and spared not to let me know they thought me but a mawkish fellow after all.

Years ago, when the memory of these things was yet vivid in my brain, not yet faded with the suns and snows of time, and the fashions of hatred and

bitterness only lately put off; I pleased myself, for 't was such a pleasure and relief as a man feels in making a copy of his sins, to think he outfaces the recording angel in his own office—I say I wrote in a little journal or handbook my thoughts as I remembered them, during my punishment.

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The first part is ended; of this I am made aware by the creaking of the wheels as the cart begins to move. I am drawn out of the town and along the road whereon I have so often ridden in happier condition. The yoke pulls back and forth on my neck, try as I will I cannot fit my pace to that of the oxen. The air is grown keener since morning and my hands and arms, bound as they are to stopping of the blood, ache with it. The wind whistles mournfully through the naked trees, fluttering the black geneva gown of my good pastor, who leaves me not an instant, but as he hath got me for his parishioner late in the day, seems determined I shall not lack for his ministrations. Not all the people have followed us from the town, for the freshness of the pageant is already worn off; the boys straggle among the trees nutting and playing of leap-frog. A thing that surprises me is the number of Indians that have joined themselves on to our procession: they must have come out of the forest, for few were in the town when we started. Neither are they the praying Indians who cling to the settlements all through winter, but tall, handsome, sprightly men in skin breeches and beads. They keep together, chattering hoarsely, and gesticulate, pointing in my direction many a time as who should say, "Is this the man?" or "This is he." I wonder

with a dull surmise what they think of me in their hearts. Do they despise me, or is my disgrace theirs as well, who are no less under the heel and at the will of these rude people? Are they pitiful of me or fearful only, mistrusting the scourge may fly wider and reach their nonconformity?

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I am scourged a second time at the wood-pile. I feel the strokes, but little pain; only a sudden heat or glow after each, and marvel why. (I know now of course that the bruised, swollen flesh of my cicatrices was less sensitive than at first, but did not then.) I am indignant no more, but sick and weary of heart, yearning to be out of the yoke. The sun is gone behind clouds, the sky turned lead colour, the folk standing round feel the cold; they stamp their feet and swing their arms. Many point upward and prophesy snow; they are cloyed with the pastime, and eager to be back at their firesides. Some boys chase one another with shrill cries behind the crowd.

From where I stand I can see the gate of our pastures. I wonder where is my mistress to-day. I am consumed in a strange fever to see her, hear of her again. Nigh a day and a half hath sped since last I saw her; what an eternity! What tale was told her, I wonder? Hath, she too, countenanced this? I strive to think so, yet cannot; what comfort supreme could I feel my pain any of her devising!

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There was a man, dead now, very wise, and innocent as wise, that bade me in such an extremity

as now I am in, and absolutely in the power of mine enemies, however I forgave them in my heart, to indulge my imagination with thoughts and projects of revenge. "I have been as near death," said he, "in lingering and horrible shape, as ever man went and lived to tell it (the man was a traveller but no missionary), and can tell you this; there was an ennui and languor of mind during my torture when I found such thoughts as I recommend unto you, very myrrh and wine to my fainting brain." Let me think then of vengeance. Lord! how many Indians are in the crowd; there seemeth a brown face for every white. Ah! were my face like theirs, my friends no further from me than these forest warriors, what a penalty should be paid for this day's work! Miserable canting cowards! ye dare to browbeat and flog a lone man that hath dropped among you as from the clouds. That is a safe sport. He may cry to heaven for help, and that be no farther from him than his friends. Were I an Indian, not an Irishman, I know well ye would not venture thus to handle me. Oh, that these red tribesmen were my kin! fierce and brave as yourselves, and no whit less cruel; ye should learn with what fell instruments heaven can arm itself to punish injustice and inhumanity. I know well (thus it is I console myself) I am well decided how we shall attack. By night it shall be, when ye are every man and woman of you secure in your warm beds. You shall gaze upon death with stupid, sleepy eyes, be slain unharnessed and unshod. Red fire from barn and stack shall be your sunrise; ye shall think the end of the world arrived, and the end it shall prove unto you. Your neighbours shall be no help, for they shall be in like case; fire shall answer fire; you

would save yourselves from the flames, and the steel shall meet you at your doors; the darkness shall breed you enemies as the sun breeds midges; you shall turn from one to be stung to death by his fellow; ye shall go to meet death, your wives hanging upon your necks and your children in your arms; stumbling, like a laden ox among wolves.

I am no longer cold; the blood is boiling through my veins: I mark this man, how I will have his throat cut, this other disembowelled; no circumstance of rapine and plunder hath ever passed under my eyes but I rack my memory to inflict it afresh. Oh! fearful property of cruelty and injustice, to unchain such dragons in a simple, loving human heart! You might have seen me on the *Sure Hope*, scarce a year since, fondling my shipmates' little children in my arms, holding them stealthily and half ashamed against a breast that seemed aflow with pity and yearning. This was the same heart; what hath changed it? Love for love 't was ready to return; not in any stinted measure; heaped up, pressed down, running over; too profusely; too generously; its fault was its prodigality, ready to squander its treasure for a careless word, to wreck its happiness lest a truant fancy went unrequited. Denied of men it turned even to brutes. A dog's cold nose thrust in my hand, a horse's whinny at my footfall, could wake the tender pain. If offending, how eager for pardon, and reconciliation: if offended, what winter sun hath its wrath outlasted? A word could disarm its anger, a glance procure its sympathy. This was my heart, what hath changed it? God's curse, I say, upon the coarse hangman's hands that will go plunging in among such chords and fibres to tear out that which distasteth them! We flog men as we

thresh corn—brand men as we brand cattle—crop ears as we lop trees; like flint against steel, like wind through smoking flax, our cruelty goes forth to light the fires of hell on earth.

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We are out of the forest and amid the houses once more. They have taken the pillory from under its shed and wheeled it over against the tavern door; two men are upon its steps, raising the top piece; it is stubborn, and I hear the blows of their mallets. Am I to be put in now or first scourged anew? thirty stripes—was not that my sentence? My head spins; I can no longer think nor count clearly, it may be I have had the thirty. I think I see them; thirty grinning devils, in parti-coloured liveries of shame and pain, squatting upon the pillory steps, their tongues thrust out at me. A great wave of fear floods my soul as I think again I am going mad. The lash, as it falls upon my shoulders, is a relief; it recalls me to my flesh, brings back the spirit into the body; to make a count of the lashes steadies my reeling brain. After the tenth I wait for another as when a child I listened to a clock chime. Ah God! what new torture is this? are they branding me too with red-hot irons? 'T is only the marshal pulling my clothes up on my wealed back. My hands are untied—he is signing to me. What must I do? I am pushed up the steps, I turn giddy looking down as though from a height, my arms tingle with the returning blood, I lay head and hands where I am bid, there is a crash like thunder behind me and a little cloud of dust; the marshal turns key in a padlock, he is in front of me now, nailing something white above my head, at which the

crowd shouts: 't is as though his hammer drove nails through my temples.

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What a vast concourse are on the green, like to a market day in my own country. I would count them for occupation, but they move restlessly hither and thither, and 't will soon be too dark. Why do they move, and above all, beyond all, why do they talk first with one, then with another; what more is to say? Surely all hath been said that can be said. No, no, nothing new ever to be told on this earth of Richard Fitzsimon. Ah God! was ever name so dishonoured, so dragged through filth and slime? Well might I weep and wail the day 't was given me at the font; was there no jeering echo beside up in the roof that foretold its ignominy? I abhor it; 't is become hateful in my ears as the name of an enemy, of a pestilence. The duress of my punishment begins to find me out. I cannot draw my knees under me to steady myself, for the board goeth all the way to the ground: I must rest all my weight upon my neck to ease them. Worse still are my arms; they so bent, so forced to come up one on each side my head, that I can move nothing there, and the cramp in them is intolerable.

The crowd still moves and shifts; some come up nearer the pillory to read the paper over my head. Old folks leaning on young maiden's shoulders; children are led too, and gape up at me, understanding nothing, with great round and wondering eyes; one old sick man is brought in a bed, the title is explained to him and he spits feebly toward me, slobbering his beard and chin.

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My neck is beginning to swell from the constraint. I had not foreseen this and am seized with terror. I must be garrotted here, then, and die upon the scaffold after all. Had I not begged for it? Ay, but this is awful, to strangle by inches. My throat seemeth to be closing up; I cannot swallow my saliva; if I am to cry for mercy I must be speedy. No, I will choke sooner. I cry out, and 't is like the bleat of a calf. The throng roar with laughter and press nearer the pillory, they think there may be sport after all.

Still the discussion below me. It is mostly among the striplings and hobbledehoys; they are urging something upon the marshal, who shakes his head, then shrugs his shoulders. He walks over to Grout, who stands in a pastoral attitude, his cloak held together in front of him, one finger still in his Testament, speaking to some of the elders. The marshal addresses him; he seemeth to consent but with a lifted finger. There is great activity among the crowd, a woman passes in among them with a basket.

A blow resounds upon the pillory next my ear like a pistol shot, presently another further away. They are to pelt me to death then; my head is to hang in the frame, bleeding, battered and shapeless like a dead man once I saw, that had hung over a wall three days in the sun. I wave my numb hands, I strive to speak, I writhe my head in its collar; a stinking egg breaks over my mouth, a third stone strikes the board under my head, and presently another my left hand.

Somewhat soft and warm brushes my cheek and drops under my face. There was a repugnance inexpressible in the contact, yet 't is only a squirrel.

It lives still, though its head was battered in ere they flung it; it moves its little white teeth fiercely. I yearn over the poor creature; what comeliness in its coat and brush; what a design in its light body to leap from tree to tree, yet slaughtered for an instant's sport. While I look down at it, a stone findeth me over the brow; I am stunned; the blood gushes forth like a fountain, flooding my eye and running into my mouth; ere the first shock is spent another lays open my cheek.

(These two stones 't is like saved my life, loosening the engorgement of blood that was slowly strangling me, but of this I guessed nothing then.)

.

What an ache throughout all my body, like a man racked! What an oppression on my chest, like a man under the proof. Is the endless day closing in at last, or are my eyes filming over? The sun is red as blood over the houses; the sound of my breath affrights me, 't is like a bellows handled by a child. There is some agitation among the crowd; they turn their back on me. Three horsemen have ridden on to the lawn; nay! one is a woman; she bends over and speaks to the magistrate, a man riding by her seems to expostulate with them too.

Ah, come not nearer, come not nearer still! be satisfied to watch me from afar! think 't is the hue of the declining sun not blood ye see so red upon my face! Set them to fling again, take part yourself! It may be I have waited for your hand to hurl the stone that speeds me from my pain. Slay me! here is your chance to set a seal on silence and make secrecy so sure, that never slander, like an evil weed, can blossom,

and infect you from my grave. Slay me! while mid
the throng one eye persists to turn and look for pity
in your face, your good name hangs at hazard next
my head, and every stone they fling rebounds on you.

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I lift up my eyes, she has not gone; her horse champs
his bit and shifts his feet, restive amid the crowd;
she manages him while the others argue together
and pats his great arched neck. Some order is given
to the marshal; the crowd begins to move away,
like actors when a masque is over.

.

I am dying, and have not said a prayer. I can
stand on my feet no longer, but hang limp from
wrists and neck; the pain has ceased unless I stir,
then 't is back like a raging ache in a tooth. I try
to rouse my brain, but can remember only a ribald
chorus. 'T was ever thus: once, throughout a long
day of battle I was haunted by a catch I had heard
a soldier sing. I have no fear; what man could pass
from such an ordeal but to heaven? What red robed
martyr but will stand my champion? I will not make
death irksome by bootless prayers. All my life have
I feared him, and lo he is here, and 't is nothing!

I open my eyes again, 't is pitch dark, the lawn is
empty. A light is coming toward me, dipping and
dancing, wavering and broadening, I watch it in a
fright. Now it flares and roars. A man is holding
a torch before my eyes, he peers into my face, then
feels it with his hand. He fits the key of the padlock,
turns it, and lifts the board from over my head.

"Can ye stand?" says he. I tumble in a heap on the steps, cold and faint with agony.

The torch is a constellation in flames. The fellow chafes my hands.

"Come, come, master," says he, "rest awhile, and presently try again. Ye had but three hours of it. I'll warrant to-morrow now, y' are as limber as an eel." He pulls my doublet together and buttons my collar.

"Take a dram to help you," says he, holding out a flask toward me; but I shake my head.

"Am I to go back to prison?"

"I have no more order concerning you," says the man, "but to let you out. Go your ways!" and therewith leaves me.

I lie where I have fallen in the shadow of the pillory. I feel my face gingerly, but my fingers are too numbed to tell me aught. I swoon, then wake again. There was a hand just now felt mine, soft, like a woman's. I start, the blood rushes back to my heart; if it be she; oh, if it be she!

It is an Indian, naked to the waist; the muscles on his smooth back strain as he draws himself like a weasel along the ground to my side. He lifts himself on his elbow; lays his finger on his mouth.

"Who are you?" I ask in the Indian dialect.

"Master Simon," he whispers, "you forget Queasy, Indian fiddler, so soon? That very same pipe you gave me in my pocket now. Oh Master Simon, this very, very poor cheer. But no matter; better cheer for you presently. Listen! good news for you; your friends, my friends, very near us to-night."

CHAPTER XXIX

AN HOUR afterward, the Indian having left me, I drew myself painfully together and stood erect, tottering upon my feet. I looked all round me, over the dark green at the darker bulk of the houses, marked the light bursting through chinks and curtains of their shuttered windows, the ruddy smoke curling from their chimneys, how, think you? fiercely, reproachfully, shaking my fist? Nay; for all the pain of my racked body, I capered clumsily in the darkness, I rolled upon the ground stuffing grass in my raw mouth to stifle my laughter. I snapped my swelled fingers, pointed and spat and laughed again. A terrible object must I have seemed, had any been there to observe me, like an evil prophet cursing or a witch sowing plague.

Suddenly all this mirth sank in my heart, like a geyser in a rock-pit. I kneeled on the sandy grass and prayed:

Lord lend me strength, lend me strength to do what I must do! Never did I need Thee as now.

I put my hand to my head, striving to remember how the road lay back to the Long Meadow. The common or lawn, as 't is called here, was but a rough place, all hollowed out into pits and holes where each man dug sand as he had need of it. I fell a dozen times before, guided by the plash of the river, I found the road at last. It was the supper hour and none were astir; yet in such dread was I passing of the

houses, lest any should come out and stay me, that many a time, where three or four lay close together, I went round the backs, scrambling through enclosures and planted gardens, rather than pass their doors. But once clear of them and within the gloom of the forest, just such a joyous lightness of heart got hold of me (for all there were three miles before me, which to traverse I might almost despair), as an escaped prisoner under sentence for his life may feel, with the prison and the last of his guards a mile behind him.

It was near midnight, but there was a light still in the window when I unlatched the orchard gate. The hound bayed from within the house at the noise of the hasp. I fell on my knees, where poor Calamy had fallen months ago, and knocked at the door.

"Who is without?" says my mistress's voice.

"It is I, it is Richard," I told her in a wailing voice, "are ye not to let me in?"

She unbolted the door, and I limped wearily into the house-place. There was no light but the fire. She put her finger to her lip, and running over lightly to the door that opened on the staircase, fastened it with its leather thong. The dog bounded upon me, licking my hands and cheeks and thrashing his flanks. I was too weak to withstand him and fell back into a chair, burying my face along my arms.

"Are ye pursued?" my mistress asks me.

I shook my head. Never, never until my dying day, shall I forget the despair of my heart, when, lifting it to answer her, I marked the woman's recoil. Yet there was no light but the fire.

"Why do ye stare?" says I presently, "do ye not know me? Is my face so fearful?"

She took her hand down from her heart.

"I will sponge your wounds," says she. "'T is the dried blood looks so ill."

"No, no," cries I, as she reached to the lamp, "not the light!"

She put down her arm.

"Yes, yes," said I eagerly, "the light—and fetch me a mirror."

She searched upon the dresser until she found a little Spanish hand-glass in a yellowed ivory frame, and for a moment I looked at myself therein. Not only was my face altered, but 't was like nothing human. The stone that had cut me upon the forehead had caused a piece of skin to fall over the eye, whereto 't was glued by the coagulate blood. My left cheek was blue, and swollen, like the chaps of a pig, from the blow the tithing man had given me during the trial, and my nose like her snout. My hair was matted and powdered from sweat and dust, full of filth and nastiness, and across all this disfigurement the scar given me by the woman herself stood out, raw and weeping. I dropped the glass; its surface shivered into a thousand fragments upon that luckless floor.

"This is your work," said I, "curse you! curse you! this is all your work."

She had been filling a bason, dipping her finger to test its warmth, now she set it down upon the table, and put her hand to her side again. The dog was licking at mine; there was no other sound for long.

"Were you in the plot against me?" says I, "do not lie to me."

"I knew nothing," said she. "I swear it before my Maker. I saw your horse at the tavern door; I heard your voice, shouting and singing within; I

waited all night for you; in the morning they told me you were jailed. How dared I go to the town, knowing not what your drunken tongue had let slip concerning me. Later I went down and had Chapin give surety for you."

"It was a plot," said I, "a damned cabal. They set a man upon me, they besieged the doors. Did ye not know that? All, all are guilty, those that schemed and those that suffered them; I will spare none."

"Let me now bathe your wounds, Richard," says she soothingly, "we can talk later of revenge."

"You shall not touch them," I told her fiercely, "the worst is that which you gave me yourself."

I took the rag and washed a little of the blood from my cuts, wincing as they smarted and bled afresh. It seemed this action opened the wounds in my heart as well. I pushed away the ensanguined water, and, leaning my forehead on the table, burst into sobbing and complaining like a child.

"Dear God! dear God!" I wailed, "what had I done to deserve it? Whom had I hurted or harmed to merit it? Oh! 't was monstrous to choose me out for their victim. Me without one friend, without one penny, so naked, so powerless! See, the very dog pities me," and the like.

She brought me fresh water, and stood by, regarding me still.

"Take away your eyes!" said I rudely, "since you shrink from me, begone from me."

"I shrink not," she answered stoutly. "I will dress your face if you will suffer me."

"I will not be tended," says I, "with your trembling fingers; there is no love in your offices. You had

the door bolted against me; you suffered me to be tortured rather than your good name should suffer. Well, 't is safe; be happy now. Not if they had shredded me with pincers would I have uttered your name."

"Weep, Richard!" said she, "weep again! 'T is your heart is overcharged."

"Shame, shame!" I continued, "upon your callous heart. Were you human, you would have been watching at your gate, have taken me in your arms, let me lean upon your shoulder. Instead, you shrink from me, ride away and leave me hanging, shut yourself in your house. I am disgraced, it matters not how or by whom; because your cursed little brood hath writhed and stung me, I am metamorphosed, no longer the same; the shame is mine, you think, not theirs."

"No, no," said she, passionately now, "not theirs, nor yours, but mine—all mine. Oh! when I rode into the square to-night and saw you, I prayed to God, for your sake and mine own, that you might die. Is my own punishment nothing? I am a proud woman, ye know it, but I had rather go the way you have gone to-day, an adulteress, in a white sheet and my hair shorn from my head—rather have sate through Sabbath in our meeting, on a penitent's stool, with the scarlet letter of my sin upon my arm, than have seen what I saw to-day, and know you could survive the shame and meet my eyes again. I am but a woman, yet had I been in your place I must have flung myself upon them, torn them or been torn myself limb from limb."

"And you shall see it yet," says I, rearing myself to my full height, "you shall see it yet. Till then

keep your prayers and pity; there shall be need of both, I promise ye. Ah! brood of vipers," cry I, waving my arms above my head in a phrensy of rage; "insensible dogs that made holiday all day over a poor gentleman's broken heart; I have you, I have you all, in my gripe and at my pleasure. Never a punishment hath followed the sin so fast upon its heel as shall yours. I will make of you a beacon and a warning to history. The measure you gave me I will return to you still warm; the mercy ye shewed me to-day, I will shew you to-night."

"Dear God!" she cries, covering her eyes, "he hath gone crazed, he hath gone mad."

"Did I tell you I had no friends?" I go on, not heeding her, but swaying from side to side like a ranting preacher. "I lied. Never had man friends like mine. The King himself hath not such, or he would not wait for his avenging. Strong as lions are they; swift and fell as wolves; crafty as foxes. From the battle-field, from the spital, over oceans, through forests, their might hath tracked me. When the King's crown went down that afternoon in smoke and blood, what message was sent from Worcester unto London, from London unto Rome? That the King is safe? Nay, but that Richard Fitzsimon is prisoner and must be sought. What message from Rome to the New World? That France shall rule here, Spain there? No, but that Richard Fitzsimon is found and must be followed. Whereto is the craft of the savage put, his enmities applied, but to seek him? Deserts are crossed, rapids overshot, forests threaded to come at him! Are these friends worth the having? You say you are a proud woman, well. even to you, were they friends unworthy the offering?"

"I understand not one word," said she, her amazement changing to concern, "have ye eaten aught all day?"

I shook my head and sate down. I was indeed faint with hunger; 't was nothing else had stopped my tongue. She got bread and hot milk ('t was not till long after that I remembered it had been heating at the fire for me) and set it before me. I swallowed it down, blowing upon the spoon, and while I ate she took the rag, and sponged my face gently and deftly with it. My exaltation melted into tears again, as it ever did when these homely offices were intruded upon it. What I had to do seemed terrible beyond words; my very heart shrank at it; yet it must be faced. I looked round the kitchen as she bandaged my head, regarded its neatness and propriety, the timely preparations for winter comfort, the bacon flitches and onion ropes, the jars of preserve on the by-shelves, which I had helped her to tie down and label (one sunny afternoon, — rapturous with her love), at the hound dozing on the hearth.

"Listen," says I, between my sobs and mouthfuls, "you know I must leave this place."

"Eat your supper now," says she, "we will talk of this another time; be assured the matter is not ended thus. My father will see you righted. The affront is on us as upon you."

"You make it terrible hard for me," says I, essaying once more, "I tell you, I must leave this house and place to-night."

She frowned and shook her head at me as at a child.

"To-night you shall sleep," said she, "and naught beside. Come, despatch, and I will order your bed

"Agnes," said I, steadying my voice that she might feel I spoke lucidly, "do ye remember a certain night your father left us, and that Calamy died?"

"Why recall it now?" says she, "it belongeth to a past that is over and done with."

"Oh God," cries I frantically, "hearken to this woman! I have a little strength left; the sands are running out for life and death; and she counters me at every turn. Are we alone in this house?"

"Yes," said she quietly, sitting down and gazing at me with dilating eyes, "alone but for the maids."

"Will you give me your attention while I speak?"

She bowed her head, looking at me all the time.

"Nor interrupt me until I have done, if I have force to finish; no matter how mad my words may seem to you?"

She made an impatient gesture that I should go on. I began brokenly.

"That night of which I spoke, I would recall only this. You saw a curtain at the window and asked me why 't was there. I lied to you. I had returned earlier than you thought; I had a letter to write; there was an Indian waiting upon it—Queasy the fiddler—to take it to another. Oh God! I am growing faint—I cannot finish!"

She sprang to her feet and brought me a glass of spirit, holding it at my lips. Her own face blanched as I went on, but she kept her promise.

"That other Indian," says I, reviving with the draught, "was come a very long way. I had met him early that same morning. Then I thought you were to go away. Can you not conceive of it? Then he seemed sent by God. He had a letter from Père Jogues, a missionary that was an old friend and

master of mine. Do ye understand aught?" says I, "am I telling my tale collectedly?"

"I understand enough," said she gravely, "he was a Jesuit."

"Ay," said I, "come down to make some alliance with the tribes here against the Iroquois, whom ye call Mohocks. They are the great enemies of the missions and of our faith—why am I telling you all this? This matters not. He was then three days journey from us; there were with him several Indians, two soldiers and two priests."

"Were they English, the soldiers?" she asked, looking in my eyes.

"English," says I impatiently, "how could they be? they were a Frenchman and an Italian, or may be a Spaniard. What matters it?"

"Nothing," says she. "In God's name, how did these men know you were here with us?"

"That was a chance;" I told her, "some Spaniards were in Boston, storm bound, the week after I left, and heard of me."

"There seems over-much chance in your story," said she, "but go on with it."

"The letter," says I, "the letter he sent me is in my hut now, unless they have plundered it. He begged me to come away that night with Bartholomew, that is the Indian, and return to the missions with them."

"Instead," says she, "you send a letter by Queasy. What said you therein Richard? Tell the truth!"

"That I had found a woman to love me, and would stay."

She took her breath in sharply between her teeth.

"That is why you were so hesitant that night?"

"No," said I, "my mind was made up. I had sent the letter then."

"Go on," says she, frowning and a little weary, "I know not yet why you are telling me this."

"Because they are back."

"Who are back?"

"Queasy," says I, "and the other." I did not dare to tell her more then.

"To take you off with them again?"

I nodded my head.

"Ye bade them return for you when your fancy should be spent; 't is a pity it did not quite last your calculations; but near enough, near enough. Well; go you with them; I will not stay you nor betray you. Is this all there is to tell?"

"You drive me mad!" said I, wringing my hands: "do ye not understand? You are to come with me."

She laughed.

"'Fore God," said she, "I think not! I am too old a woman for forest ramblings at this season. You must make my excuses, good Father Richard, to your order."

The blood left my cheeks, and I did indeed wish, now I had died in the pillory.

"Listen," said I hoarsely, "we waste time. I have gone the wrong way about to tell you. All had best bolt out. They are all back here."

"All," she repeats, "what mean you by 'all?' Tell the truth!" she cried, leaping to her feet, her eyes aflame, and gripping my raw shoulders, "you lying Jesuit, tell the truth!"

My hair rose under the bandages.

"The priests and soldiers," says I, "with many strange Indians."

Never in my life have I seen a face so shocked as hers at these words. 'T is hard to describe its aspect; perhaps if one suddenly, in good company, were to ejaculate some gross obscenity, his auditors might look the same.

"'Many Indians, many Indians,'" she echoed, putting back her hair after the manner of dazed people. "Where are they? Are they near at hand?"

"In the forest beyond Pickosick," says I, now throwing discretion to the wind, "to-night they are to fall upon the town. Ay," my hatred, to my great relieving, getting the better of my apprehension once more, "all this damned nest of serpents shall be smoked out to-night. Fire shall burn them, blood quench the fire. You I will save because you were kind to me once. I am not forgetful; 't is not love; had any in the settlement done me one slight service, I would remember him to-night. But all have been my enemies, avowed and relentless. I do no harm to slay them; no more than ever I did."

"And you imagine I will help you?"

"You cannot hinder me," I told her, "'T is out of your hands and mine as well. You think not surely 't was I invited them back?"

"To be sure," says she.

"Why," says I, "I have told you I did not. Five hours ago these men were in the moon for aught I knew. 'T was not until Queasy the Indian crept to my side under the pillory that I knew they were at hand."

"You lie," she answered, "and this sheweth it. If you had told them you were content, would they have returned."

"On that point I am not clear," said I, "nor on

many another. Oh! can you not read truth? not see that I am amazed even as yourself?"

"No," said she, "but I am very clear on this; that I shall mar your beastly plot?"

"How will you do it?" I asked.

She ran across the kitchen and reached to her cloak.

"I will saddle a horse now," said she, throwing it round her shoulders, "and give the alarm. Your Jesuits and their proselytes shall find us ready."

I rushed to the door and put my back against it.

"You shall not! you shall not!" I cried breathlessly, "or ye will kill me first. What! you would sully my honour who trusted in you, who dragged my broken body here to-night with pain and peril infinite, to no other end but to save you? You will betray my friends, who came hundreds of miles, endured untold hardships for my sake, to liberate me from such a doom as ye have seen me suffer to-day? You will deliver them to death for the sake of the vile people that scourged and pelted me, and whom ye have just now bid me tear in pieces or be torn? Why, there is no more honour in you than virtue! In what a labyrinth of treachery did I entangle myself the day I gave you my love!"

She set her face.

"These fine words do not unsettle my purpose a whit," said she. "My place is with the people among whom I have lived from childhood, whose bread I have eaten, whose illnesses I have tended, whose babes I have clasped against my own barren breasts. I seek not your destruction. I give you full licence to go. I will neither prevent you nor pursue you. But to aid you in your bloody work, no, nothing shall make me do it. Justify yourself to your own soul if ye

can, but not to me! Your people are not my people, your gods not my gods. Come, sir, let me pass!"

"I cannot strive with you," said I, "I am too weak and bruised; have your will then; but of this be assured. You shall not find me living on your return. You have chidden me because I survived my disgrace; I promise you I shall not survive my dishonour too. I had thought there might be enough of love or liking left in your heart to spare me it; well, I was deceived, and I die for my mistake."

She sate down again and buried her face in her hands. I thought she wept, but she was thinking.

"There is another way," said she, looking up, "that we have not thought upon. You say you are of such consequence to your order that they send across the world seeking you; belike they will turn away from this massacre if you bid them. I will give you a horse, such other things as you need, and a clear day's start. Then surely ye are enough of a soldier to extricate yourself. In the meantime I will tell such a story to the townsfolk as may put them indeed in preparedness, yet so as none may know whence the danger cometh. Nay, if you give me your sacred word to stay them or give us warning timely, I will be close upon the matter altogether. Come, Richard, what say you?"

"And are you," says I, "so fond and foolish as to believe that I can at the eleventh hour turn away this fell people from their purpose? The priests and it may be the officers would heed me, but would the others? 'T is me indeed they seek, but these others—? What think you the bait hath been to bring them all these leagues? a pair of hams and a sack of powder such as I could take them a-horseback?"

"I have jewels," she said, rubbing her palms together, and wiping them upon her skirt, "jewels I have never shewed you, that I never wear, that were my mother's; she brought them from Leyden. They must be of great worth. Richard! Richard! ye shall have all if you will but turn them back. The soldiers would know their price."

I shook my head stubbornly.

"No, no," said I, "jewels cannot purchase my honour, for this is what you would ask. We are talking, and should be acting. Bestead me or betray me. There is no way between."

"Oh!" cried she, clenching her fists and shaking them over her head, "curse the day, curse the day you ever came amongst us! Of what was my father thinking? Where was the wisdom he is forever hunting in books? He was forewarned; there were plenty to tell him; nay, he knew himself what thing a Jesuit was; yet he would depart and leave you in our midst! You have shared our roof, eaten of our bread; crept and insinuated yourself by such vile tricks as only your society hath the secret of, into our counsels; gained my father's esteem, won even my poor affection as a pastime while you waited; read Testament with us, prayed with us; and all the while your bloody heart was marking us for destruction! Where was the honour, where the truth you prate of now, that day, by the brook, when, with your hand in mine you swore to me by your mother's chastity you were no Jesuit? Is there any oath sacred enough to force the truth from your black heart and shifty lips? Where were truth and honour, that night, when, kneeling with your face upon my knees, you forswore the monstrous doctrine and idle terrors that had cheated

you of your manhood; bidding me, do ye remember it, over and over again, to kiss you, and give something of my own strength and courage to your quailing soul? I never trusted you. I knew well that 't was only a question of so many weeks or months, and you would be back at your vomit, and if I let you, strive to force me to it as well."

"This is no time," I answered stubbornly, "to argue concerning dogma or to bandy reproaches. I wish to save your life and my own honour; there is no other purpose in my mind. For the rest, you are become a stranger to me, and may remain one. Do ye come with me to-night? Yes or no?"

"To be ravished by your Spaniards?" says she.

"Your words," I told her, "are vile and unwomanly. My friends are no ravishers, but gallant gentlemen and holy priests of God. Even were I taken from your side, your honour is as safe among them as in your father's house; safer a hundred times than here alone and with that trencher-captain at your side."

She thrust her fingers through her hair, in an extremity of despair, and rocked her body back and forth.

"I will not, will not come," she moaned, "Oh my father! my father!"

CHAPTER XXX

THE moments sped past; fugitives that shrieked on me to share their flight, and still I wavered.

I stood with back against the door, but, for all my resolute posture, there was only indecision at my heart. 'T is a misfortune of the human soul, that, at such a supreme crisis, 't is far less the inherent righteousness or unrighteousness of contending courses that can avail to wrest a verdict from our wavering will, than the moving eloquence of its own concepts and memories. So, now, however I strove to balance abstractions of right and wrong one against the other, as, my duty to my friends, the precept toward my enemies; my irresponsibility for the massacre, since, though it revenged a private wrong, 't was no ways prompted by it; the resignation of my scruples unto other, wiser, and cooler heads that was now so easy and handy for me; the difficulty of my choice, since either way there was like to be murder done, of my friends or of my enemies, and ethics take no count of numerical preponderance; the freedom of my choice for the probable or more probable good; these things I say would no more stay in the balance nor weigh down the scales than so many bubbles, but, dashing against each other were dissolved in an instant and quite other things left.

A portage on a precipitous river where through my saviours carried their frail canoes; the brown eager faces of the Indian catechumens, the bearded

gravity of the priests and soldiers as they blessed or directed the work.

A glade in a forest on a dark night; silent but for the roar of a cataract or the wail of savage beasts. A fire beneath a rock, kept low and small lest its glare or smoke attract the eyes of enemies, with whom the desert paths are sown. Around it my friends crouched, coughing for the smoke, comfortless, uncheered : toiling for me, endangered for me; my kinsmen in more than blood, my fellow countrymen far beyond these clowns among whom I dwelt, degraded and endangered; co-heirs of the kingdom of God, comrades in the Church Militant; my peers in birth, in breeding, in punctilio.

The beastly face of Grout, swollen, flushed and sweating as he bellowed forth my sentence to-day. The missiles and coarse insults of the lumpish striplings; the pompous strut of the magistrates; the senile cruelty of the elders; the shrill scolding of the women. Over for to-day, but God knoweth when to recommence. A nightmare from which these friends have journeyed to rouse me.

Then, the kindness and tenderness of my mistress to me a while ago. (She had been very kind and very tender; if I have not insisted upon this, 't is only because I see danger in its too lively recall, both to myself who write and others that may read me). Her diligence yet for my well being; both for my stabling and the propriety of my clothes. This I know is woman's common occupation, but because of my homeless wandering life, it always touched me the nearest. The difficulty of her position in this colony; as beyond tutelage, yet not so old she had outgrown scandal, nor loneliness; the one woman of

breeding here, foreign at heart I am sure to their communion whatever her outward conformity; her sad lifewhen young; her childlessness, which is always a secret chagrin to women; her love for her father, which was the prettiest thing to witness ever I encountered; the awful irrevocableness of the choice which fate through me was now forcing upon her; all this taketh time to tell yet 't was but an instant. She was still weeping when I turned upon her.

"Listen!" said I, "you shall have your will, but not before you have learned the truth from my lips. Cruel, cruel woman! Why do ye say I have crept and intruded myself into your household? All the world knows I was brought to it, like any ox or ass, with a collar round my neck. I am of gentle birth: I have had princes and nobles for my associates, yet here am I bound to stay ten years, hewing your wood and drawing your water, keeling your pots and greasing your harness; 'Davy do all things' as you have dubbed me so often with your Scot's wit, and 'good at nothing.' Tasks to which ye cannot set the squalid savage but his heart breaks, have been my daily occupation, and did ye have any pity for me? Never a word of it from first to last have I heard on your lips. You were not like the others; you were of gentle blood, and must have known how galling the yoke I bore with such patience, how hideous the discrepancy betwixt the uneven conditions of my birth and fortune. These things to kinder, gentler women are subject for tears — to you, food only for merriment. Why, you have chidden me for my clumsiness and laughed at me for my carefulness in a morning; joined in the wags of your own farm hinds at my expense. They had but the will, you the skill to hurt me; you knew well

where that poor cowering fugitive, the pride of a fallen gentleman, was hidden and to be sought, and daily haled him forth for their wits to belabour. What a lash was your own tongue! Did my loins ever fail to quiver at it? Was I despondent?—I lacked manful mettle. Was I hopeful?—in an instant your rough sense could tear my delusion to shreds. Did I weep? Fitter a man should be drunken. Did I lighten an heart with song that was too full for weeping? What a slave was I, to sing with a collar upon my throat! Did I eat with a relish? A true monk, and busiest at the platter. Did I not? How queasy, ill to please was I! Whereto could I fly from you? Wherein take refuge? Each moment of my day was at your disposal; passed beneath your eyes—within your call. One refuge I had and you would not leave it me: the peace of God that passeth understanding. With that cloak around my shoulders I was safe from you. Oh! why did I ever lose my hold upon it? 'T was the old fable o'er again; 'where wind faileth, sun availeth.' With a thousand wiles and weapons, old as this sinful earth, but new to me, you set yourself to win my virtue from me. Oh tell me not I was a willing victim! I own it. To that robbery my very innocence contributed. I was credulous, I was trustful: 't is my nature to respond quickly to the shows of love. I was poor and a little seemed much to me; I was friendless, there was none to warn me or supply my un wisdom; a spendthrift was I, that had but himself to spend; a gambler, staking the treasure of his heart against the base counters that are the trading stock of women like yourself. Do you know that they wrote above my head to-day? 'this is a wolf's head.' Did ye read it, Agnes? How must you have laughed,

who knew 't was no such thing, but only a cony's. You should know me well. I have told you all, given you all, yielded you all; my will, my pride, my truth, my chastity, my faith, my honour, my salvation, all, all are yours. I am beggared, Agnes! Before such nakedness the very horse leech's daughters might be silent. Is there aught more? Yes, one thing more I can give you; hitherto 't was but myself I sacrificed, now I must sacrifice others. My friends; were they not fond, were they not foolhardy to come so far, relying upon my honour and secrecy? They knew not what a partner I had taken to my bosom, or sure, sure they dared not have adventured. Yet I wrote that night to Père Jogues; I said '*Mon père*, I have found a woman to love me and whom I love. To-night I shall be in her arms.' Was this not forewarning enough; doth he not know, he a priest, what a Moloch is this love, this godless impure love, this antechamber and receiving house for hell, this furnace, wherein not alone is a man content to seethe himself, but will cast all that he hath—duty, gratitude, obligations, friendships one by one; to gratify a whim, to sweeten sour looks, to freshen 'stale kisses. Wherefore are women like yourself thus powerful, Agnes? Ye are no fairer than honest women, no kinder than honest women; yet have I known men let their wives go barefoot, that their lemans might go silkshod. Wherein is your power? Will you tell me to-morrow ere they hang me? Yes, yes," I cry, "my eyes are opened; I know now why he hath come back; 't is not because he is ignorant of these things; 't is because, he understandeth them only too well. 'T is a wonder no more to me. Dear Master! ye are wise with the wisdom God leaveth only to the chaste! you know

what thing a woman's heart turns once virtue is gone from it; how inconstant, how inhuman, how damnably hard; casting aside the devotion of years for the desire of a moment; cloyed with surrender, eager for change; once tempted away, not to be held, neither by fear nor favour; in each new lover's kisses finding Lethe and Nepenthe for the old. Dear philosopher! you know it well. No sooner that mad letter read through, than you guessed what a hell awaited your poor little pupil, and strove to reach him in time to save him some of its anguish. You say," said I to the woman, "that I reckoned badly; it seems here is more miscalculation. They thought that toil, that forced marches could bring them in time, their speed outpace a woman's random desires. And 't is this man, my father, my saviour, you bid me surrender unto you to-night, with all his company; poor souls, whose zeal for me, whose faith in me have worked their ruin. So be it! So be it! It doth but finish my damnation. No fitter ending could this folly have, the maddest surely that ever the insensate heart of man perpetrated. They are yours. I give them into your hand. Only think not," said I, for she kept her head averted, and I went mad at her insensibility; "think not that I am ignorant for what a dishonoured thing I strip off the last shred of my own honour, before what a base, broken, and prostrate idol I offer these precious lives. Bad and mad, I am, God knoweth; but I am blind no longer. To-night I see you as you are, and 't is as though a veil fell from before my eyes; the woman that promised her arms should be my fortress and refuge; who when I creep to them, stripped, and bleeding, pours no oil nor wine, but the vitriol of her tongue upon my

wounds. You! you of all the world to shrink from me to-night, because I came to you plastered with filth and spittle from the cloaca into which I stumbled! Vile outpourings of a vile rabble! what power have such things to degrade me? Am I the first to earn them and to have them paid me? The greatest, the noblest of mankind have endured them before me. They are the patent of my dignity, the ensigns of my rank, honourable scars; my portion, but that you bankrupted such things once for all, in the passion of my Lord and Master. No, no! Your favour 't is that degrades me, in my own eyes as in heaven's I am dishonoured by your love, I am unclean from your kisses; and were I in God's hell to-night instead of that which man maketh for his fellow, with what ardour would I embrace the flames that purged their pollution from my body and lips! That thing which I would not have done, no, nor dreamed upon, but that I loved you and thought my love returned — what hath it been to you? The indulgence of a appetite, the satisfaction of a craving so mean and abject, that the best and wisest grieve to think they share it with the brute. That place to which I believed myself elected beyond all others in the world,— what other might not have had it that lay as near to your hand and as apt unto your purposes? For what else did you choose me? Not for my quality; that hath been a mock and a jest with you from the beginning. Not for any poor comeliness even that my face once possessed, and which it will never have again; you were the first to brand and sear it. No — but you saw me, poor and unchampioned; a dependant on your will, whom no humours could drive away, no favour make presumptuous; ever at hand for the

relief of your spleen or your lust by turns; so drew me on to fling me off, kissed me or repulsed me, called me or dismissed me at your whim; used me in your day of wantonness, and when the season was past and my importunity tired, struck me, struck me, O, Jesu! across the face with your riding whip. And now," said I, (there was more to come, but I weakened suddenly), "now you have heard the truth, go! and rear the town against me. Better death a thousand times than such a shameful bondage longer."

Long before I was finished, she had come at me; throwing her arms round my neck, striving to press her face to mine, and to check the torrent of my words with her own mouth. Even when I flung her off, roughly I fear, for she fell to the floor with a little cry of pain, she clung to me still — weeping, sobbing, seizing my hands, covering them, covering my torn garments and soiled shoes with kisses.

"Diccon! Diccon!" she wailed, "have mercy! 't is false, 't is false! oh! 't is you that are cruel. Every word you utter is as a dagger through my heart. Oh, I am not a wanton, I swear it before God! I love you, I have loved you always; yes, from that first morning ye came into our house-place and answered my rudeness so grave and gentle; better than my father, better than my life. Be gentle now! See, I will go with you, whethersoever you are bound, whatsoever you do. Nay, I will die if you take me not. See, sir, see how I love you, see how I abase myself; now you cannot leave me, you must take me after this," and the like.

"We shall soon see," said I, breathless and merciless, "whether this be true, or only more of your accursed craft. I bid you come no longer. I promise nothing;

I threaten nothing. Consider well what you do. I know not even whither I am bound: we shall both of us be in God's hands. I start hence in a quarter of an hour; I will not come back nor wait for you one moment beyond it. Therefore," says I, turning back in the door frame, "if ye are not bent to come, look your last upon me now. This place hath seen my sin and hath seen its punishment, and now shall see me no more. I will never cross your threshold again, Agnes."

CHAPTER XXXI

SHE came with me. I know not now whether I had looked for it or no. I think if I had opened my door and not seen her, I was in a mood to begone without once glancing toward the house, yet I was no ways surprised to find her awaiting me. It was as though to-night I should dream of her and waking find what my sleep depicted. All would seem natural at first, the marvel to come afterward. She sate on the settle close to my door, a sad lonely figure. There was no moonlight, but the pale glimmer that goeth before snow. She had cut off all her hair and clad herself in a suit of her father's. She had a great bundle on her knees that I took from her without any words, and, giving her my hand, led her away. She looked into my face timidly, but I kept my own eyes averted; I dared not contemplate the change she had wrought in herself to come with me. Withal, she could have read nothing there; there was nothing just then in my heart to which my face could have been an index. That torrent I had unloosed had encountered a mightier in full course; amazed, unresisting, the confluence had flung us together: blinded and breathless now, we clung hand to hand amid its foam and swirl, lest the waters divide and sweep us asunder again.

She had brought the great hound, which raced hither and thither joyously with his nose to the ground, thinking he was being taken hunting.

"Why have you brought him?" I asked her fretfully.

"Would you have them track us with him?" she answered.

When we got to the bend in the wood where I had once saved her life, I faltered and looked back at the house; she pulled at my hand.

"Hasten Richard! hasten!" says she, "we have lost overmuch time already."

"No, no," said I, struggling to release my hand, "go back Agnes, you must not come! There is a curse on what we are doing."

She put her arms about my neck and drew down my face to her own.

"Now do ye bid me go?" she asked when our lips were asunder.

I caught her hand again.

"You are my wife," said I, "by that kiss in God's eyes; and shall be in man's before another day hath dawned."

The Indian Queasy was waiting for us in the shadow of the trader's hut. We crossed the ford, to our knees in its icy waters, and plunged beyond it into the opacity of the virgin forest. It was warmer amid the trees; the path twisted and wound, often with scarcely room for us to walk abreast, but I never released her hand. So dense was the darkness, I could see her face no longer; so intricate the clue which we must follow, that the Indian often stooped, as though to discover by some signs or tokens at our feet whether we were in the right path or no. Only upon resuming our walk after such an halt, did I become conscious again of the pain in my body. The dog slunk close at heel, his tail drooping.

I calculated that we were some half hour gone, when

of a sudden an owl hooted in the trees over our heads, which the Indian fiddler answering in like kind, he was joined by a comrade, who slid down the tree whence he had cried and took the lead of our party.

Not an hundred yards further the path struck uphill, the trees dwindled away, and there was a little stony clearing wherein among rocks and boulders a fire crackled and smoked. The strange Indian called out something in his tongue, and one of a group that were sitting there sprang to his feet and coming over to me embraced me. I knew he was a priest, though he had his long gown tucked into his girdle and leather stockings upon his legs.

"And this is Richard," says he in French, when he had kissed me upon both my bruised cheeks. He held me at arm's length and peered into my face: his own was strangely troubled and joyless for all his cheering words, and motions. The darkness, the danger, the savageness of the meeting checked us both, and hindered us from speech. Amid such peril human affections are best dumb, human eyes best averted, straining for the pillar of fire and the cloud.

"Richard," he whispers again, "whom God hath given to our prayers at last!"

He took no note of my companion; she clung to my hand tightly, and I could feel that her own palm was clammy and trembling from emotion.

"You are wounded," said he noticing my bandages; "I must dress your head before aught else."

We were now come to the fire, such as 't was, and by its fitful illumination I saw there were four others whom I judged to be Europeans, but sorely wild and tattered. One of them carried a musket in the folds of his cloak; he was bearded, with a great breadth

of chest; another, slighter and younger, who wore a sword, gazed hard at my companion and whispered to the older man. I drew my mistress gently into the firelight, and, saluting them gravely, turned to my old master.

"I thank you, *mon père*," said I, "but this gentle lady hath already tended me, and 't is your other good offices we seek."

At my words all sprang to their feet; the soldiers doffed their hats and bowed. They were ragged, they were unkempt, their cheeks covered with soot, their eyes inflamed from crouching over smoke and fires; what mattered it? That forest was a palace, those rags were silk and velvet, those charred gobbets presently should be a banquet; such an alchemy hath courtliness and gentle bearing.

"Will ye marry me to this dear woman?" said I, taking her within my arm.

The good priest looked infinite sadness and perplexity.

"Richard," said he, low to me, "we looked not indeed for this. Who is this lady? and why comes she with you?"

"She comes with me," said I, "to become my own true wife, to be made flesh of my flesh, to be so joined unto me that none can henceforth put us asunder. Will you marry us? Yes or no?"

My old preceptor wrung his hands, as though ashamed of me, "Oh," says he, "is this a time? is this a place for speaking of such things? You know not what you have done, Richard, to bring her with you."

"'T is done now," said I, "will you hallow it?"

"Does this lady speak French?" asked the Jesuit.

"Not a word," said I, "ask me what you will of her."

"Is she the woman concerning whom you wrote to me?"

"The same," says I, "what of it?"

"I came to save you from your sin," says he, "and you bring it with you. *Mon Dieu!*" covering his face, "you terrify me!"

"Ten words from you can make it a sin no longer," I told him. "You have the keys to lock or unlock; I do but pray you to use them."

"You speak wildly, Richard," he answered, "you speak as one that knows nothing. Marriage is a great sacrament; not to be taken lightly, and in sin."

"What is wanting here?" says I.

"All, all is wanting," says he, beating his breast, "confession, disposition, divine grace."

I took him by the sleeve.

"Come," says I, "behind this rock and I will confess all. Sweetheart," said I to my mistress. "Will ye please to sit here awhile among these comrades of mine, while I go apart with this good father and despatch some business that will not wait?"

She clung to my arm and seemed to weep.

"What are you saying one to another?" shewhispered. "Why does this man look so harsh upon me? His eye frightens me."

I bade her fear nothing, and, turning to the two soldiers:

"Messieurs," said I, "I know not your names, yet I see well you are gallant gentlemen. This is the lady whom I love and that loves me; to-night she hath left all, home and kindred, for me. Will ye be tender to her, like brave soldiers and true gentlemen that ye are? Will you, if I be taken, stand to her in my stead?"

The French captain bent and kissed my mistress's hand.

"My name is Gaston Vincent," says he, "Sieur de Frontbruin: God deal with me as I deal by thee, my daughter."

The Italian kneeled at her feet. He was but a handsome lad, with fine dark tumbled hair and the eloquent eyes of the South. These are terrible things to think on now.

"I am Guido Caraffa," said he, "a poor gentleman of Genoa. My life was your lady's before you asked it of me."

The priest led me behind the great boulder under which the fire was lit, and seating himself upon one of the fragments that lay around its base drew a faded violet stole from out his pocket, and, kissing the embroidered cross upon it, put it over his shoulders with a mournful sigh. (Lord! Lord! how I have learnt that heart heaviness since.) I kneeled down and laid my burning forehead upon his knees.

I told him all; the impurity, the blasphemy, the murderous hate that had run riot in my heart; God found me words for all. Often, upon repeating some enormity or another, I would stop amazed at his silence, thinking he could not surely have heard me aright, yet sit so still.

"Hast thou heard this last, father?" would I say, but he only:

"I have heard, my son; go you on!" I was overwhelmed, inundated by shame. There is in this act of confession a confusion that never fails to wring the heart of a man, however lightly he may have come to it. 'Tis only as one by one his sins loose their tentacles and drop from his burdened soul,

that he sees them truly, what filthy monsters they are that he hath been entertaining, what parasites he hath let suck his spiritual substance. When I was done, I did not dare at first to raise my head. I marvelled to hear no sound save the muttered talk of my new comrades on the other side of the boulder. I thought that he might be giving me the absolution in secreta, as is often done until the *Passio Domini Nostri*, of the second part, but as the moments passed, I looked up, and saw that he sate still as a statue, his face covered by his hands. My heart sank.

"Wherefore do ye not absolve me?" says I, "is it not enough? do ye wait for more?"

"Confession is not enough, Richard," he answers, "there must be repentance too, satisfaction, earnest of amendment. You bid me absolve you off-hand; you speak like one that is a stranger to our faith and discipline. What ravages must sin have worked in your understanding!"

"I see," says I, "you doubt my compunction."

"I am driven to it," saith my confessor, "there is no sign of it in your narrative."

"Examine me then," says I, "I will tell the truth to you as to God."

"You lived in sin with this woman," says he, "did you not?"

"I have told you so."

"From the time you wrote your letter until now?"

"No," says I, "'t is nearing a month now that all is over."

His face brightened.

"Ah!" says he, "you turned away from your wickedness?"

"No," says I, "I cannot say that."

"'T was the woman then that ended it."

"Yes, *mon père*."

"Strange," said he, as though musing to himself, "often it happeneth thus; the most forward to sin, is the first to repent."

"Mind you," says I, "I answer not for her motives: I answer not for them."

"Of what religion is this woman," asks the ghostly man.

"An heretic, of some kind," I answered him, "that is all I know."

"Hath she a liking for Catholics?" he goes on.

"None at all," I told him, a little drily; remembering sundry speeches of hers concerning monks and the like matters.

"A hatred then?" persists the priest.

"No, I will not say that neither."

"You have spoken to her of Catholic doctrine?"

"A little," says I, "not more than I could help; for reasons, *mon père*, that you must approve."

"When you did," says he, "what hath been her carriage? Disdainful?"

"Sometimes," I faltered, "but oftenest — ah, *mon père*, forgive me if I pain you, oftenest she has laughed very heartily at them."

"Roundly," says he, "you have observed no motions of grace in her?"

"Roundly, my father, not one."

"Yet you would marry this scoffer," his brow darkening; "partake God's Holy Sacrament with such a one?"

"Yes, *mon père*."

"Make her the partner of your life's pilgrimage,

the mother of your children? Practise your religion amid her sneers and raileries all your life?"

"Yes, *mon père*."

"Be faithful, Richard, till the end, with an enemy in your bosom?"

"My father! my father!" cried I, "you torture me. To speak thus is to mistrust God's mercy. All my life shall be led but to one end, that she be converted. Oh," said I passionately, as he still hesitated, "were I dying you would absolve me, can ye not do the like now?"

"Ah, Richard," says my old master sadly, "death presents no problem, but solves them all; 't is when we priests deal with life that we tremble at the responsibility God puts in our hand."

His lips moved awhile in prayer; then, tossing his head a little, as one that giveth sign he hears a message aright, he bent over me a face whereon was the reflex of God's eternal love and indulgence.

"You shall have absolution," says he, "but upon a condition: without it I dare not spend the blood of Christ for you .

"Name it," says I eagerly, yet my heart quaked too.

"If I bid you in God's name, send this woman away, and come with us, will ye do it?"

I covered my eyes at his words, with something very like a curse at my heart. Here was the old ordeal afresh, how ruthless in its recurrence, how sickening in its sameness. Renounce! renounce! Well might my smitten heart despair, hearing the word that first goad it to madness and revolt, now, when I return salute me upon the threshold of my father's house. And now 't is not alone with my desires, I must fight, but with my memories too. And

this priest knew it well. With the deadly logic of his order, he had probed my soul and discovered what a quailing resolution lay at the bottom of all my desperate words and deeds. It hath been said of our religion that 't is a good one to die in but an ill one to live in; and thus far I think is the saying justified, that at each reception of the sacraments, to which we are bound to resort, it forces upon our hearts of clay the issues of eternity, and requires of our will decisions that men outside of us may evade all their lives, and shirk until their deaths. But who can strive with God? My will snapped and broke suddenly.

"Father," said I, wearily, "whatever you command me that I will do, but would God I had died to-day before 't was asked of me."

The priest bent down and kissed my cheek.

"'T is well," said he, "I will absolve you and marry you too."

Even as he spoke the absolution, there was a rustle in the bare branches above our head, something cold and frail that fell and melted on my clenched hands. The first snow of winter, threatened throughout all that leaden day, was come at last.

"A gift for a gift," cried I, hysterically, as I rose, "God shall find me no niggard. To-day, in that town at our feet, I was abused and tortured, my face branded, my pride abased forever. In my helplessness I vowed all that outraged me to death,— now, with the thunderbolt in my hand even, as God hath forgiven me, I forgive them. Come with me, *mon père*, and help me save them."

CHAPTER XXXII

WE LEFT the Pickosick valley on the 10th November, 1652. There were thirty-four souls of us; of them I believe myself to be the only survivor to-day; that is, the ghostly fathers Père Jogues, that was my master at St. Omers, Père Boutet his coadjutor, both Frenchmen and Jesuits, and Père Chabanel a Recollect; M. Vincent called de Frontbruin, and M. Caraffa, an Italian of Genoa, donnés* of our order; myself and my wife, that is seven Europeans. There were besides seven Indians, catechumens of the Jesuit mission; these were Abenakis or it may be Hurons; they spoke a different dialect to our Indians and had their hair dressed in three combs like a chanticleer's, whereas those of our settlement go shaved but for a lock like Muslims. Of our Indians (Mohegans) there were eighteen, besides the one called Queasy by the English, but in their idiom Quissibondewith, which means whistler or warbler. So that of us all there were:

- 5 Europeans that had come from New France.
- 7 Indians, Christians from New France.
- 3 Indians, guides: I know not if they were Christians; that is fifteen, besides.
- 2 Myself and wife, came at Pickosick.
- 17 Mohegans (Indians of the country):— made
- 34 souls.

I say seventeen Mohegans, because this is the most

* Lay Helpers.

I ever saw asleep together: it is like there would be now more, now less, from time to time, since this was their own country. Note also that there spoke English:

Three, myself and wife and Queasy (or Quissibondewith).

Spoke French and English :

Myself alone.

None of the Christians spoke the Mohegan idiom.

I am tedious concerning these lingual difficulties because, unless they be well understood, all must be misconceived. Be it always remembered then:

First. That I could not speak to the Mohegans but through our whistling Indian.

Second. Nor any of the Frenchmen but first through me or my wife and we through him again.

Third. The Indians might speak one to another and we no wiser:

Fourth. And Queasy to them and we not know did he interpret aright.

We rested all day on the 9th of November, because of the soreness of my body. None of the Christians strayed from camp; but there came in during the day scouts of the Mohegans, that reported all quiet, and brought game. Snow fell very heavy all day and during most of the night, but the cold less. Late in the afternoon, feeling much refreshed, I put on leather stockings and went down to the edge of the forest, when I could see men and dogs running but the scent astray on account of the snow. Darkness coming on, they desisted.

On returning we found the Mohegan Indians greatly stirred. A sorcerer was among them with roots and medicines, which they were rubbing on their bodies.

His motions were very childish; he cut his lip with a piece of broken shell until it bled, and then, rubbing some root upon it, sucked up the blood as fast as it came out. Also he took a dead squirrel or rat and having anointed it, laid it along his arm, when by the management of his muscles he made as tho' the creature were come to life again.

This night 't was arranged how we should sleep on the march; the Mohegans in our centre, with M. Vincent and one of the priests; the other Indians outside of them with the match and powder under guard. All lay close for the cold. My wife had a great robe of beaver skins, and they builded for her whenever we halted a shelter of bark. I lay outside of it across her feet.

10th November. We started at morning star, to my great joy, and made four leagues before dark, the most part through a raging snowstorm. This was a very great detour; at the day's end we were little farther from the town than when we started, yet it seems there was no other way, since the Connecticut must be crost north of the English settlements, and we must keep to the forest.

Early in the morning my wife called to me where I lay at the foot of her bed, awake, and staring at the sky through the trees.

"Richard!" says she, "do you wake or sleep?"

I crept into the frail shelter and took her in my arms. I was dismayed to find her cheeks wet with tears.

"Why sleep you not?" I asked, "are you over wearied from our march?"

She told me she could not sleep for thinking.

"Nor I neither," says I, and we lay silent awhile.

"Richard," says she presently, with a catch in her voice, "whither are we bound?"

I told her what the Frenchmen had told me; that is, that we must cross the Connecticut, which is the great river, above the falls, and follow its valley sixty or seventy leagues to Pocumtuck where the Jesuits had their mission; that we were to stay with them until spring, when the lakes melted, and then to make our way by water to Fort Royal in the French settlement.

"And how far is that?" she asks.

"I am not sure," I answered, "perhaps other seventy leagues, perhaps more." All this I said in a stout assured voice, but to say there was any assurance in my heart would be a lie.

"My God!" said she under her breath,— nothing more; and lay silent.

"Of what are you fearful, Agnes?" I asked her, catching the infection of her mood.

"You were never here through a winter," said she, "or 'fore God, you would not ask. We freeze in our houses ten feet from the fire."

"We are still near the town," said, I querulously, "there is yet time for you to return."

She did not reply for a while, but I felt the agitation of her bosom.

"Sweetheart," said she, "will ye be angered if I put a command on you?"

Said I: "It shall be my law, Agnes."

"Never, never again," says she, "tell me what you have just told." She burst into a very storm of sobs and tears, which I comforted as best I might, but 't is easier to make a woman weep than staunch her tears.

"Beloved," said I, "even as I spoke those words I repented them."

"Oh!" she murmured, "after what hath passed between us, 't was a deadly offence."

"We are unstrung," said I, desperately, "we are unnerved, both of us. Oh, I burn, I pant to be away from this country with all its deadly memories. Once 't is behind us the journey will seem nothing."

"Why do they dally?" she asked. "With winter upon us, why have they left their return so late?"

"Their guide was killed," said I, "on his way back; Bartholomew the Indian that came first to me."

"Who leads them now?" she asked. I told her Queasy was our guide.

"You know him of old," said I, "what character hath the man?"

"He was a Pecod chief," she answered, "taken during the war. I think the others of his tribe were slain. There were some murders laid to his charge, but never proven. My father mistrusted him, and he was never allowed near our house."

Soon after she grew drowsy, but my brain was aflame with anxiety. When I was sure from her breathing that she slept, I gently disengaged her arms, and going stealthily over to where M. de Frontbruin slept, touched him lightly on the shoulder.

He sprang erect in a moment, even as he rose casting from him his cloak and drawing his sword; the noblest, most martial figure ever I saw in my life. He sheathed his weapon when he saw 't was me, and laid his finger on his lips. We sate down together.

"M. de Frontbruin," says I, "will ye take an adviso from a younger soldier?"

"What is it?" said he.

"To watch the English Indian. I say not he is

dishonest, but I think it best one should be near him at all times."

The Frenchman laughed a little ruefully in his beard.

"*Merci, mon ami,*" said he, "for your caution; none the less that 't is a little belated. Henceforth the man shall not stir without me at his elbow."

12th November. To-day befel a most terrible accident. The French captain was drowned trying to discover a ford. It was Queasy the Indian guide that brought the news to us. He appeared distraught with grief, and for many minutes could give no coherent story of the occurrence, breaking forth into howls and lamentations, kissing the officer's fur cap, which had floated to the beach. It seems from his tale that M. de Frontbruin, believing he had found a passage, had adventured nigh to midstream not much over his breast, when, stepping into a water hole, he is swept off his legs by the force of the current, and catching hold of a trunk that was there, anchored by some flags, being coated with ice it turns in his hands and striking him on the chin lays him under water, whence the Indian never saw him emerge, though he dived, says he, until blood gushed from his mouth and nose. With this unspeakable calamity we were as men astounded and unable to comprehend our loss; the fathers sit in a stony silence, the Italian weeps and beats his breast. 'T was dusk when this news reached us and we had no heart to cross the river by night, but camped, and ate our bread salted by tears. God's hand seemed very heavy upon us.

13th November. This morning as we were preparing to resume our march, we heard a great commotion in the camp of the Mohegans, who, though they slept

among us yet ate in a mess by themselves, and presently some of them coming among our Indians found means to communicate their ill news, whereupon our catechumens were seized with a like agitation, only ten times worse. Now here is the reason. Our Mohegans, having gone out at dawn, as was the custom among us to furnish the meat for our company, for during the march none might scatter to hunt, and swimming across the river, presently on the farther side they meet, say they, with many wretched fugitives, who tell them, that the country is full of Agnieronis (this is the tribe called Maquaws by the Dutch and by the English Mohocks); that they have burned many villages, slaying all with terrible tortures that fall into their hands; they are thick, say the scouts, as quails in grass, there is no passage through their country; they have discovered the canoes of the Frenchmen, hidden among rushes, and have sworn a great oath to capture them and revenge themselves upon them for the death of Tispaquin (this was an Iroquois captain that had been taken and burnt by the Algonquins as is the fashion of their nation, which no enlightenment can eradicate). That they boast they have a scaffold built the length of ten men, whereon all shall die, and be a month dying.

At this shocking intelligence our preparations to cross were at once suspended; the Indians held a council, as is their custom, and when they had been some hour jabbering they bade us come in among them. The captain of the catechumens, Joseph Missequaut, spoke the first; throwing dust upon his head and smearing it upon his cheeks, he thus addresses the superior of the priests:

“My father! thine eyes deceive thee when thou

lookest upon us. Thou thinkest to see living men, but we are naught save ghosts and the souls of the dead. The very land thou treadest on is not solid; like ice at springtime 't will gape of a sudden and swallow thee with us. This morn in council have we decided to abandon it, and to retreat. Whither? askest thou. We know not; to the woods, to the sea, but better among the fiercest wild beasts than exposed to the Iroquois. What wilt thou and the pale faces do? Hast thou come to preach thy faith to these oaks or pines? Will rocks and rivers listen unto thee? Where wilt thou adventure? whom follow? What shall attend thee save hunger? what guide thee save the stars? What then is the remedy? Take courage, we will shew it thee! look to the Mohegans, there wilt thou find it. There is no time to deliberate; already do we hear the yells of our enemies behind us; we must turn back, the Mohegan will shelter us; he will take us into his village; we shall eat from his kettle and sleep by his fire. In the spring, when the hatchet is buried and the rivers open, we will return. What sayest thou, my father? Wilt thou not save us who brought us here? Thou hast told us often that thou hast us in thy heart. Now make proof of it; abandon us not to death!"

"Tell them," says I, when this speech was translated over to me; "that my life is forfeit and the chase afoot; that if I go among them to the English country I am a dead man; that I will go forward though I go alone, and would liefer face a thousand wild savages than one Englishman."

"Thou speakest rashly," replied the old sachem; the young man with the sore head speaketh foolishly, like a babe, because he knoweth not the

Iroquois. They are devils, not men; they kill not their prisoners in war, but seek to capture them, and bear them to their villages to divert themselves with all through winter. This they do by burning them away with a few coals from their feet up; by plucking out their nails, by breaking off their fingers, by running hot needles into the marrow of their bones. Their prisoners may call upon death, but death cometh slow, slow like a tortoise. See," says he, holding out his spear towards me, "if my brother wishes me dead, let him kill me now rather than lead me into the land of the Iroquois."

"Moreover," says another, "though the English brother would die, what is he, one man, that all should perish for him? Have we not done enough? Have we not come through many perils, made many enemies to save him? If he will go on, let him go himself, there needs no guide for him. Let him ask the eagle to lend him her pinions, the mole to lend him her burrow. There is no other way through the Iroquois."

I was silent, and there was no more question made of our going across the great river. The Mohegan captain, who had sate silent, or whispering Queasy, now comes forward, takes off his cloak and throws it over Père Victor; his anklet he gives to another, his necklace to me, something to every one, saying:

"Thus I cover the black robes with my own body. Now shall all that hurt them hurt me too. If they grow weary, I am faint; if they are wounded, I shall bleed; if they be glad, I shall rejoice."

Before we started this morning, the Indians, I suppose to propitiate me, made a litter of bark wherein

my wife might be carried, with a handle made of a sapling. We journeyed thus some five leagues.

Amid all these doubts, detours and delays, 't was a matter of endless wonder unto me to watch the composure and sweet helpfulness of my dear wife. After that first night she questioned me no more; even when we retraced our steps, she asked not for the reason. The priests took scant heed of food, being content to chew a little smoky, dried meat and to swallow a few handful of parched maize when they fell hungry, but now there was a woman among them, she quickly let them know these matters must be mended. At all our halts she would busy herself in dressing the meat, for during these days we had game a-plenty, and make cakes of the parched flour. I could not watch her at these tasks without melting to tears. By the grotesque fashion of her dress and the shearing of her hair she was changed almost beyond belief; there was something wild and strange in her aspect that I cannot describe, as neither man nor woman, that filled me with distraction. Her vanity was quite gone from her, and a man may spend all his life with a woman and never see her stripped of that; her face too was soon grimed with smoke like the others, for so rapid were our marches, there was no time for such matters as washing, and by night we were too wearied, besides that the robes which the Indians lent us to sleep in were infested with vermin, and when we loathe our bodies we do not tend them. Yet with her it seems even in misery there must be housewifery, and her hands were never idle; she had brought needle and thread in her bundle, and mended the torn cassocks and vestments of the

priests as she journeyed in her litter. Of what did we speak, will you ask? I will tell the truth; we spoke scarcely at all: a day might pass and not ten words break its silence. 'T is true she would have me ever walk at the side of the litter, and was uneasy when I went away from it; now and again would thrust out her poor soiled hand to me, and, when I kissed and fondled it, would press it closer over my mouth; but of the old life we never spoke; that sweet litany whose response, "I love you, love you," varies not nor tires ever, was in our hearts, but the times scared it from our lips.

I am sure now that she despaired from the first. Once, upon her asking me to give her something from her bundle, I had the curiosity to look therein and saw the green satin dress and some shifts and collars, folded and limp from the damp air. I kneeled looking at them, my jaw fallen, anguish gripping my heart like an executioner's hand. I could not compose my face before her eyes sought it; the cheerful mask dropped from her own as utterly; we fell weeping into one another's arms; there was no need for words between us nor nothing words could say.

16th November. Being the Lord's day, before resuming our march we celebrated the adorable sacrifice of the Mass, my old master being celebrant. Father Victor allowed me to serve him, but to my great sorrow would not admit me to the Eucharist, though I had fasted since midnight.

During the day my wife questioned me very closely concerning this Mass; she was moved at the devotion that all shewed, Indians and Europeans alike, bowing their heads in the snow at the consecration, and had me explain the ritual to her. I can

not tell what a joy 't was to me to be upon such topics with her. I begged Père Chabanel for a little medal of the Virgin, such as is given the Indians, and offered it to her very timidly, but she took it and laid it in her bosom, afterward as I discovered putting a cord upon it to hang around her neck.

After Mass, as we were to pass through a doubtful country, our party further separated, the Italian with the Abenakis going on ahead under the guidance of a native of the country, ourselves following last. There were no Indians left with us now, save two of the catechumens who carried the litter, and Queasy the fiddler.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"DIES IRÆ"

THIS morning was I awakened just before light by one of the priests, Père Chabanel, who pressed my shoulder, bidding me arise, with his finger at his lips that my wife might not hear. We were camped upon a hill near to the edge of the forest. This I knew not the night before, since 't was dark when we halted. I got to my feet and saw a red light through the trees. I asked was it dawn already.

"Alas!" says he, and takes me with him. Below us, in a valley, were many fires as of houses burning; I counted five in flames and others dull as though burned out. As we watched, the roof of one of them fell in with a fountain of sparks. I had seen many towns burnt but I think this was the most shocking. Around us and behind us the wilderness was so still, a little snow slipped now and then off the branches above our heads with a kind of shiver. Whether the wind was away from us or that snow deadens sound, I know not, but there was no noise of crackling or rush of flame to be heard. All burnt silently; above the town the snowy hills were red from the reflection, as though lava were pouring upon it. I stood, with clenched hands, like a man in the crisis of a nightmare, struggling and fighting for consciousness again. Presently we were joined by the other two priests. They asked me did I know the town.

"Oh God!" said I, "methinks I know it too well."

They asked me again, could I guide them to the town; after a little, I remembered the path which we had followed on the day I first rode into Summerfield with my master. We returned to our camp; as I armed myself my wife woke and asked me whither was I bound, but I bade her lie close and not stir until my return. One of the priests, Père Boutet, and an Indian stayed behind with her; the other two came down with me. I bade them take weapons but they would not; holding up their crucifixes they said: "These are our swords." Whosoever said they were armed otherwise, hath lied.

We had much ado to find the bridle path, and when found, to follow it. It was against a cliff, and the snow had drifted in deeper there than elsewhere; often we were to our waists; day had begun to dawn before we reached the first of the houses. This was Caleb Hazen's, the sawyer, hard by the stream. The house was afire but burnt slowly. There were no Indians, but at the fence two poor babes, twin children, impaled, upon the palings, a horrible sight. Père Jogues melted some snow in his hands and baptised one of them that still moved; it died as we drew it off, the other was dead already. I adventured into the house; not far. 't was too full of smoke, the wood being green, but methought I saw dead bodies, naked, lying under the smoke.

At this house the path forks; one part of it follows the stream and forest for the best part of two miles into Summerfield, the other goeth across some cleared fields to the settlement. As we halted, debating which road to take, we heard a great outburst of musketry and yells and whoops from the town; this

was the first assault, I believe, upon the fort, which was beaten off with much slaughter to the Indians. In the end we determined to make for the settlement and save any we might; it was broad day when we reached the road. The first we saw was two Indians, drunk, and pulling along an ancient woman by her arms and hair so fast and roughly, her feet flew clear of the ground. When they perceived us they halted and flung her to the ground; the poor soul had her face bleeding and was nigh dead. The Recollect held the crucifix before them bidding them let her go, but they laughed and thrust out their tongues. One of them was a Christian Indian (Godamercy the word); him I ran through the body, the other fled halooing into the forest. We lifted the poor woman and carried her to a leanto, I think of her own house. She would have none of our help and spat in my face as I laid her down; I fear she was despatched later, when the Indians, being beaten off the fort, came back here.

At this house there had been resistance made; many Indians were lying dead around it in the snow, and all were strangers unto me. Some fugitives I believe there were here hidden under a pile of boards. Hearing them move, I called out in English, bidding them come forth for, that we were friends, but they did not, or may be were wounded and could not. I know not how they fared later when the fire took the pile.

Had the people trusted us that heard my voice, sure am I that many might have been saved who afterward perished. In one house that we searched we found indeed two children and a Negro servant, hidden under tubs, and dragged them forth; but

at sight of us they did so weep and wail you would have thought us ogres, and throwing themselves upon two savages that we had got to go along with us, embraced their legs, as though to find pity from them rather than us, which the priests perceiving, handed them over to their care, bidding them follow us, for though these men were not Christians, yet they were of our own Indians; yet, coming back, I saw all three dead in the road.

A terrible thing it was to see the houses I knew so trim, all ruinous and ransacked. The Indians had plundered them but little; that is to say, they took things of small worth, and, tiring of them, soon flung them away, but left the heavier gear to burn. The road was littered with Testaments plucked in pieces and feather beds torn asunder, for the Indians believe treasure is always hidden in them. The dead lay mostly around the doors and were naked or in their shifts, and I think they had been struck down as they adventured forth, the more so as only those houses were fired where the wind would drive the flames from the back. At each house we did alike; we called loudly, "Are any living here? Come forth! here are friends!" But none ever answered. What Indians we surprised at their work, and these were only three or four, fled away into the brushwood. Many had English clothes over their filthy skins, or women's gear, which was worse.

One thing I saw that I had never understood aright. There was a family I knew, their name matters not, of eight children, the eldest but fourteen. Their bodies lay along the track one by one, about twelve paces distant one from the other, the eldest first and so down to the youngest. Whether they had got

out of the house all together and unarmed, and the Indians followed the poor little flock, picking them off for their sport, or whether, despairing of safety, and crazed by terror and grief, the father killed them one by one rather than let them fall into the hands of these mad, harsh dragons (he lay dead the last with two poor babes in his arms) who shall ever say?

Who indeed? Not I. For would that even now the pen might fall from out my wearied and o'er driven hand! Would that some spectral fingers of the dead assumed it, and fulfilled the heavy task. Death! Death! What pen in mortal hand can limn thee truly or transcribe aright, not though 't were plucked from Azrael's own dark wing, dipped in the current that flows on for ay, fresh and uncurdled, 'twixt his fatal feet. That I have compassed sight and sound of these is naught; naught that the wind of thee went past my cheeks, thine odours hang upon my nostrils yet. Now, as I conceive thee best, what art thou? A rending, a tearing? Ay! but such as leaves me human still, gazing back upon my lost life with sad and unilluminated eyes of earth. Across the frontier of my prostrate clay, where for awhile my spirit hovers, weak, uncertain, unsustained, I watch the world reel back into chaos, into void, the same for me as never 't were created: last, 't is gone itself, and where am I, or what am I? That new light, dazzling, intense, not to be borne, that kindles now, that burgeons now, that spreads, penetrates, overpowers, ah! what must it reveal to me at last, when my reluctant head turns or is turned by some hushed pitying seraph, and across the bowed iridescence of heaven, face to face I see my God?

To-day what illumination in these sad evidences

of thy wrath, that trip my feet; o'er which I stumble, breathless and weeping, in the snow; these waifs that shew where late thy pale-horsed chariot sped; bleached, tattered, woesbegone, as though cast up from some unsounded ocean depths, to parch and wilt beneath the leaden winter sky. "Look!" they seem to cry; "here is life's end! here is love's end; here a bourne for human foresight, human hope and calculation! here the precipice whereto we travelled, and thou with us, furiously, and by night. What hast thou come to do? who art thou to save? Upborne a moment on that wind that shattered us and dashed to earth, driven along to a catastrophe thy own heart tells thee shall be worse than any here. Tarry not," they tell me, "with pitiful eyes insulting dead men whom the blind bolt slew as it went seeking you; go up to the house wherein, fastidious and aloof, ye fed the lust of your heart and tempted God, go up and take your share, or live, forever dishonoured and accursed!"

I answered:

"I am not afraid. God's will be done! Whether His hand be poised to smite or save I may not know, enough for me that I am in its shadow as of old."

I set the priests on their road back to our camp and bade them leave me yet awhile. I told them there was one I had loved and if I might not save him, I would be assured of his fate. They clung to me and wept, but I unclasped their fingers, pointing above.

"Go back to our camp," said I. "Wait for me until nightfall; if I return not, then delay no longer, but fly from this doomed land. And oh!" says I, "if I come not, if I come not, be gentle with her. Soften her heart, shew her God's hand in all that hath

befallen. Tell her I erred indeed but died to repair my error."

There were many horses straying; I contrived to catch one that had a halter about his neck, and rode back upon him to the desolated theatre of my love and sin. Before I reached it I had a hint of what I should find, for a column of smoke, dense and high as the cloud that steered the Israelites, rose above the naked tree tops. I think our house must have been the first attacked, for by now the fire had done its worst. The barn and all the sheds and leantos were gone, but the flames had never conquered the great logs whereof the house was builded. The four walls and a part of the roof still stood, smoking like a censer, but without flames or glow save when the wind drove sadly against the ruin and bared the red heart of the charred timbers. A snowstorm came on as I gazed: it seemed that God, having shewn me this last of His judgment, would cover the horrid sight away ere the shocked stars beheld it again. The air was acrid with odours of conflagration, the yard before the house all trampled and bloody, strewn with carcasses of cattle wantonly slain; a horse hamstringed and left to die, plunged and neighed piercingly, giving a voice to the tragedy. When I had killed him, for I could not harken to the poor brute's cries, there was no more sound of life; only the crunch of my own heels in the snow.

I drew my sword and passed in. The house-place was dim with smoke, but not itself on fire. The upper chambers had burned away, and some of the flooring and roof had tumbled through, but one could still walk here, gingerly and half-choked.

But the ruin was amazing—the work one would

say of weeks, not days nor hours. The floor was covered ankle deep in a litter of broken plates, copper pots and pans, and shattered household gear; the staircase was hacked away, and through the trap in the ceiling where the stair once passed to the upper chambers, a mass of rubbish had fallen nearly to the ground, amid which I marked the carved pillars and woven hangings of my mistress's bed, charred and smouldering away inch by inch.

I went from chamber to chamber, or where chambers had been, as best I might, my feet blistered in their leather stockings, my lungs aching, yet saw none dead or alive. I called, but the echoes of my own voice frightened me. I thought some beams fell at my back.

"I will begone," said I, aloud, in a kind of exasperation. "Let me begone while I may and leave it to the dead. What evil counsel brought me here at all?"

"Your fate," answered a deep voice behind my shoulder.

My blood ran cold, and I must fight a moment for my breath. I turned to where the voice had come. The great door which opened upon the yard had been wrenched from its hinges, and lay upon the ground, full of arrows and splintered by bullets. A little beyond it, one booted foot planted upon its panels, his body covered in snow as though he had stood there an hour, passive as a statue of bronze, I saw the man I have called Gideon throughout this narrative.

My first thought was that here was a phantom, a figment of brain or nerve. I walked stoutly toward the door, looking for it to vanish into the snow of which it seemed a part. Instead, he raised his sword.

"You are trapped," said he, "your cruelty hath undone you. Oh, I counted on this! I knew well you would come stealing back to gloat over the destruction you had wrought, to be sure all was well done."

Believe me or not, so intense was my anxiety, I hardly heeded threatening voice or gesture.

"Tell me," says I reaching out my arms to him, "tell me this is not true which I forbode; that my master hath returned and is slain."

"I have barred the door behind you," says he, "you shall never leave this place alive."

I beat my breast. "'Tis false, 'tis false," I said, but without heat. "I am here to save him and any that I may. This is no work of mine—before God I swear it you. Not a poor slaughtered babe in all this settlement is more innocent of it than myself."

"Look around," said he, with a sweep of his arm over the snowy waste, and indeed there was such anguish upon his face I could not choose but pity him. "Here was a township, here were firesides, here were tilled fields wrested from the wilderness, here were granaries filled by the toil and sweat of a year, precious lives, the seed of a mighty nation—all uprooted, all despoiled, all erased for one man's bloody humour. Oh! just God," says he, raising his eyes with a kind of rapture to heaven. "Let me but be the instrument of Thy vengeance here, and I am content to die as well."

His prayer affrighted me; it is a terrible thing to hear God invoked against us, no matter how just our cause.

"Forbear," said I, moistening my cracked lips. "There is enough of blood shed. I will save you now

if you will trust to me; were there not others waiting for me, I would go with you to your town, if any are alive there, and help you all to your revenge. Can you doubt me?" says I; "doth not my very voice bespeak truth and sincerity?"

"Your voice," he repeated with a passionate gesture toward me but nothing more ('t is ever to be remembered I had my sword out); "we have heard where that was trained. Vile Jesuit! truth is as foreign on your tongue as mercy in your heart."

"How ill cometh such language from you!" said I, my anger now rekindling, with a roar it seemed like that of a furnace. This man was the greatest enemy ever I had, our antipathy was a thing of nature and past helping. "How ill from you," says I, "liar and perjurer as ye know you are, who swore away my good name without a blush on your cheek; murderer too! since I well know upon whose instance I was put into the pillory, and whose hand truly flung the stones that laid open my face! Come!" making as though to pass him, "stand aside! There are no complaisant judges here to nod their heads at your slanders, no tithing men to hold me while you outrage me. We stand face to face; I am your master at this play," here I lifted my point ever so little; "I would not slay you; therefore, I say, let me pass! Our ways must twine if I am to save my soul; your very shadow oppresseseth my heart; your very voice unlooses the devil in my blood."

Now 't was all very well to be saying "Let me pass!" and telling him I was his master at fence, but I foresaw, with something very like despair at my heart, that this was like to do me very little service unless I could once pass the door, for I had no room to use

my sword inside of it. There had been a little wooden passage here, and there was enough of it left to confine my arm; moreover the floor was so hot I had to keep shifting my feet, and worse than all, the door at my back being now shut and the draught stopped, the house began to fill so thick with smoke that I could no longer, even if I wished, take refuge in it. Therefore he said well I was trapped. I could not advance for his sword nor retreat for the smoke.

Yet for all his advantage the man seemed in no hurry to come to grips. He would, ever and anon, be glancing down the road, as tho' he looked for succour in that direction. 'T was a sad prospect, I make no doubt, the houses going up like brick kilns; and if sad to me, judge what it must have been for this man, who loved it in the very measure I loathed it, whose home it was, even as it had been my prison.

"What are your wages for this bloody work," says he presently, a sob in his voice; "what your profits in it? To what end at last do your priests arm these wild beasts and roam the forests with them?" ('T is a mystery to me now how he knew there were priests with us.)

"We seek the salvation of these poor tawny outcasts," I answered, "precious in God's sight, though your carnal heart credit it not, as any secure fool's who comforted his soul last night, because his barns and granaries were full, and knew not it should be required of him ere morning."

As I spoke I pointed toward his head, he parried high and I ran under his blade, and out of the ruin. He spun on his heel and made so furious an assault, using both blade and edge, seeking to overpower me with his weight and reach, that I must give ground

from the first and use all my skill to keep his blade off me. I know not where he had learnt his fence, nor if he had learnt it at all. I have heard skilled swordsman say that on encountering such a one they were strangely discomfited, finding all their art at fault. That may have been if they were fighting mercifully, to disarm a man, but for life—no, no; a dozen times I could have had it an I willed; the very impetuosity of such a fury will contribute to his downfall. This man guarded low, kept his point at my heart instead of at my eyes, wasted the length of his blade, overreached himself as he thrust, and, I doubt not, thought he had me at extremities all the while. I could not disarm him, the rogue had too strong a wrist, but this could not last; he grew winded at last, and seeing it, I dropped my point, panting no less.

“Have done!” said I brokenly, “and for the love of heaven spare me this last. I have held my hand, you must see I am your master. I know not what fate God hath in store, but I am not to die on your sword. Were it so I should feel it in my flesh, for God created me a coward from the womb. Will ye not leave my punishment to Him?”

For answer he drove at me again, grunting with each thrust, and, as though my arm revolted I gave him the point in his throat. I meant even then to hold my hand but could not, and the blade stuck out a hand's length beyond him. He let fall his own weapon and sate down in the trampled snow, choking for breath, vomiting blood, and looking stupidly upon the stain; I kneeled down by him and put my arm along his shoulder, thinking now, not of any injury nor outrage I had suffered from him, but of a day in

the hayfield, when he had taken the scythe from my hand and shewn me how to mow. "Forgive me!" said I, aloud, I believe. He did not answer; all the healthy red bluffness died out of his face, it grew sharp and grey as he retched. His hat tumbled off his head, down into the stain. He wiped his mouth clumsily with the back of his hand; he tried to turn his face toward the town; his look was again as of one that listens.

"I was not mistook," says he very unevenly.

Suddenly he fell forward on to his face.

"Ours is the future," says he; "ours, dear land, dear land!" and pressing his bloody mouth to the ground, died.

I took his body, and pulled it by the legs into the house as far as I could for the smoke. As I turned to go, I heard a sound from outside as of two iron dishes being beaten gently together, and saw an Indian stooping for Gideon's fallen weapon. He had a black cuirass over his skinny naked body, not laced together at the bottom, that clanked as he moved; and must have crept round from the orchard even as I pulled the body in. I stole behind him, and, leaping upon his back, bore him to the ground; he struggled wildly at first, but was hampered by the corselet, and, when I shortened my sword to stab him, begged for mercy in English. I saw then that he was one of the tame Indians from the town, a poor degraded creature.

"Me good Indian," says he in their jargon, "come to steal, not to kill."

"Where is he?" cried I wildly, beating the armour with my blade, "where is the man whose armour you are wearing?"

He made a wild gesture with his arms over the river. I tore the armour from him and let him get to his feet; he stood awhile, coughing and gasping; for I had nigh throttled him.

"At Quinnicompisk," said he at length (the place of rocks).

"Who is with him?" says I.

"Queasy," he answers, "and four Indians," holding up his fingers.

My heart sickened. I made a sign that he must guide me there. As he hesitated, I showed him my sword all spotted with blood, and made so threatening a gesture with it that he recoiled and nodded his head vigorously. Even then his eyes wandered, sly and stubborn, to the Captain's weapon, but I picked it up and drove him before me.

Beyond the ford we found the poor Italian's body stripped and disfigured; he had come thus far, I believe, with the party that attacked the town, and discovering too late their object, had sought to turn them from it and paid for his scruples with his life. As I stooped over his body, two of our Catechumens came out from the trees, weeping and wringing their hands; they had been robbed of their weapons but not otherwise maltreated. I gave one of them the dead Captain's sword, which I still carried, and pressed on along the path which we had taken on the night of our flight. The guide whom I impressed had fled, but there was no more need of him. High on the hillside above our heads, a great fire flared and smoked against the sky, and around it, their bodies swollen to preternatural dimensions by the flame and the height, Indians capered and danced like ungainly spectres.

We went on toward the fire, running where the way was clear and level enough. So breathless and helpless was I when I reached it, that I must fling myself upon the ground awhile to recover my breath, and it was thus, within the shadow of the great rock where I had confessed my sin, that I witnessed its punishment.

With his back to one of the boulders, fastened indeed to it by a great rope that passed twice or thrice round his body under the armpits, was an old grey man. He was not dead, limp as his body hung, for from time to time a convulsion would seize upon all his members, and he would turn his face up to the darkening sky. There were some three or four Indians in the enclosure; all but one of them, wearied by now I suppose with their barbarous work, sate wrapped in cloaks by the great fire cooking or fingering their spoil; but besides the great fire there was a little low one, not more than a few embers, kindled at their victim's feet, and before this the Indian Queasy squatted on his heels with a red hot skewer in his hand, blowing at the ashes with puffed cheeks. As I gazed he leapt to his feet and thrust it into the captive's flesh.

"Ah!" says he in English, spitting in his face. "You beat Indian? you kick Indian out of your yard? Kick him now!"

It was but for a moment I watched all this, the next I had leapt from behind the rock and ran across to him. At my approach he turned, and, with a neigh like a scalded horse, thrust at me with the skewer. I ran him through his bowels.

"These are your wages," said I, "treacherous, bloody dog, take you your wages!" and kicked him

aside as he fell. He did not die at once, but crawled on hands and knees away to the rocks. I heeded him no more, but cut at the cords that bound my old master to the stake.

"Master! Master!" cried I, as I hacked and tore at the rope. I kicked the fire from his feet, but they were charred almost away, and he fell into my arms. He rolled his eyes upon me, the lids were cut off and the balls swimming in blood, but he knew my voice.

"Ye bloody papist," says he in a dreadful Scots' accent. "Where's my lassie?"

"She is safe, she is safe!" I cried. "She is at hand." As I spoke I heard from below the deep bay of a running dog, nearer and louder each instant.

"Oh!" says he, slipping from my arms, all his limbs writhing at once. "I am an old man, will none put me from my paining?"

The dog scrambled over the boulder, his tongue hanging out, and flung himself upon the old man, howling, and licking his wounds. I think he was dead by then. I laid the body down, and, climbing the rock over which the dog had leaped, saw my mistress and the priests toiling up the slope through the snow, behind them the two Indian lads, laden with our baggage.

"Keep her back," I cried frantically to them, beating my temples, "keep her back! she must not come here." But she pressed ahead of them. I ran down the hill and falling at her feet clasped her knees.

"Sweetheart," said I, "dearest wife, you must go no farther."

She strained to be gone; her eyes upon the fire.

"Unhand me!" said she, "let me go! I know all; they have burnt the town."

As we contended the Indians began to fire upon us from the hill. I felt one bullet drive past my head like a bee; another I did not hear, but of a sudden my wife ceased to struggle, and lay heavy and inert in my arms. I guessed what had befallen, but would not think of it. I strove to keep her on her feet, to reassure her, bidding her stand erect, that there was naught amiss, and the like, such as one uses to a drooping woman; an icy sweat rolled down my forehead as I spoke these follies. I could not carry her, she was too heavy a woman, and called to the priests for help in a screaming voice. The Indians molested us no more; they had scattered, I believe striving to capture the great dog, which these people would covet beyond aught else. If 't is so, then 't was he saved all our lives, and what not one of us with all our cunning had been able to do that day a poor dumb brute achieved at last. Such are God's ways.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WE BORE my wife behind some stunted trees, and sweeping the snow away, made her a bed as best we might. She breathed heavily, but was not dead. One of the priests, Père Boutet, had some skill in surgery, and the Indian lads having now come up with our baggage, he ripped open her clothing and felt round the wound, which was in her side, above the femoral bone about two fingers distance; it bled very little, but was blue and raw, liker a bruise. The priest shook his head. "The bullet hath gone deep," he whispered to me, "I must probe for it."

He got him a lancet, and insinuated it in the wound. I could have struck him when the woman winced, but he felt deeper. I questioned him with my eyes, and he answered in like fashion.

"How long?" says I, my throat dry.

"Perhaps an hour," he answered, "if I draw not the bullet."

"Cover me! cover me!" says my wife, "I am a-cold."

We lit a fire near her feet, and covered her in warm with our robes. I kneeled at her side waiting for her to open her eyes. Her forehead was puckered with pain.

"Do you suffer, sweetheart?" I asked, close at her ear.

"Only when they move me," says she.

Presently: "Thank God," says she, low and fervent, "thank God my father was not returned."

I said nothing, but think what I felt, God knoweth, it needs no great imagination; and when ye are done,

multiply it a thousand fold for my infinite capacity for suffering, for remembrance, for self-reproach, as I have striven to shew it forth throughout these pages; then say: if every bloody deed that hath been laid at my door were true fact, as 't is foul invention; every sudden merciless end of man, woman, and child that awful day the work of my hand and brain, as hand and brain strove to counter it, was I not punished enough? What a whisper is become the hue and cry of man, what a straw turned his sword, once God hath taken the punishment into His own all powerful, all cunning hand!

"Are all dead?" she asks, opening her eyes at last.

The ice around my heart gave way; I broke into a tempest of weeping.

"All, all," cries I, "I could save not one. Curse me, Agnes! curse me for it!"

She put forth her poor chapped shrunken hand, oh! unfathomable heart of woman! put it forth for me to hold and when I took it, pressed my fingers with a weak clasp. That short evil day of winter was worn away now; all our light was from the fire, and the snow; it shewed me death in her face.

"Have you a little spirit?" says she, "give me some of it."

I put the flask to her lips; when she had tasted of it her voice was stronger.

"Are there others here?" she asked, "bid them go away."

The priests were kneeling round in prayer; I motioned them angrily away.

"Put your arms under me," she said, "but gently, Diccon, lest I swoon again."

When I had done it:

"After all," says she, with a little wan smile "I, was to have my way, Diccon. I die in your arms."

I bent over her and kissed her forehead, clammy with the sweat of dissolution. Oh! salutations upon the threshold of the tomb, what terrible things are ye! How pallid the lips that administer you, no warmth of passion, no promise of fulfilment in their contact; ghosts of old caresses, fashions of life assumed by death; atonements for sin, not sin's recall; penitential offerings; doves slain for sacrifice!

"I have done you a great wrong," said she presently, "I never was your wife."

I thought she was begun to wander, and answered not, only to stroke her hand.

"Did ye hear me?" she asked.

"If there be aught to forgive," says I, "'t is forgiven already."

"No, no," she said, with a pitiable shadow of the old impatience with me, "you must listen. I must unburden my heart ere I pass. Recall the night you left me in tears. That day I had had two letters from my father. I shewed you but one. Both came together. I know not how, but 't was written long after; he was sick, fevered, dying belike; he begged me to marry Gideon. Oh Richard! you thought me hard and cold; did you guess what the imposture cost me? No, no," as I would have spoken, "for the love of God interrupt me not. Next morn very early I woke of a sudden, and knew beyond doubt I was with child by you. I was terrified; I lay an hour as in a trance; I foresaw all, I imagined all; the whispers of the women, the rumour growing daily louder, the heads together when I was past; the pointed finger,

the frown of the minister, the sermon; my father dead "

"Why did ye not tell me?" I could not but ask her.

"I could not " said she, "oh! I could not now but that I am dying. You ever seemed like a child yourself to me, Richard; yes, for all your wars, your wisdom, and your wildness, I could think of you no other way. When you came to me in dreams 't was always thus, hushing you at my breast, or holding your head upon my knees, and I know well this woe is come upon me because I did not spare, but scandalised one of the little ones that believe in Him."

I wept aloud. I called on God to kill me; upon my heart to burst asunder.

"Oh, peace, peace," said she, "the time is so short. What was I to tell? I rose and took poison, Diccon, from my father's cabinet. It killed me not; I was ignorant of such things; belike I took over much and vomited it away, but I slew the babe in my body, your child, Diccon, that should have been. Oh, can ye listen and shrink not from me?"

"Tell no more," says I, "tell no more! my heart will not bear it."

"You must hear me out. In my agony, for I thought I was to die, I promised God I would abandon this sin. I was affrighted by it all; by the change wrought in you, that was terrible, Diccon; by the misfortune coming so speedily upon my father. I must confirm my resolution, words are naught, there was a way handy and I took it. I wedded Gideon; none knew it, but Chapin who married us, and his wife. I made conditions, after the first we were not to live together until my father returned or we were sure of his death. Oh, what a hell was my life after

it! The Chapins pressing me to publish it to the world; the man himself, he was so masterful; your eyes haunting me with questions. You thought me so strong, so capable; poor lad, 't was but a show. I am weak as water. Never did I make any decision but disaster came of it; even this last, now all is told, I have lost your love as well."

"Oh my heart's treasure," sobbed I, embracing her, "my dear dear, wife in God's eyes, no matter the others, do ye think my love such a sorry thing? No, no, 't is stronger than sin or death; sin could not pollute it, death shall not destroy it. God's own precious gift it is unto us both; sanctified by our sorrow, pardoned to our pain. Oh, if my love hath power to comfort, then be comforted! Thou hast it all, now and for ever more!"

"Oh," she murmured, "it was sweet, it was sweet to be loved awhile."

"It is best," said she, presently, "best that I die thus; there was but this way, no other. Had we reached safety and lived together, I must either have acted this lie out, or, telling you of it, been thrust from your arms in turn. I would not have asked you to sin again, Richard, to renounce God a second time. Oh say you do not believe me so evil a woman as to ask you that again?"

"Yes," says I in my heart to God, "I do renounce Thee! I do cast Thee off for ever. Thou hast pursued me too long with Thy judgments; I am weary of them, I faint beneath them. Slay me! damn me! since Thou canst and wilt; Thou shalt not save me and boast 't was by fire. I will mar Thy harsh providences. By sorrow, by blood, by tears Thou art glorified too much already; one shall appeal against Thee, even

though it must be in hell." Yet was I silent for this woman's sake.

"The man is dead," I told her, "I have seen his body."

"Even so," she said, "we could not long have been happy. I am an old woman, full of whims and crotchets; I have an unruly tongue, what is in my heart must out. I must have gone on telling you of your faults, have hated them the more, the more I grew to love you, and so in time lost all."

Her voice changed as she spoke, 't was as though the tongue thickened. I put the flask again to her lips, but she refused it.

"What was I to tell you?" she said, making as though to put her hand to her head — "when you marry, marry a maid; no, 't was something else; why—that you bear not sorrow well, Richard. When 't is upon you you rave, you weep, you rebel, you cry out against heaven. This is not the manfullest way, dear. Sorrow is around us all, Diccon, is a part of our life, like the sun that smites us, the rain that drenches us; that it falleth on you and me is no special spite of heaven to us above the rest. Did none suffer silently, there would be naught but tears and bewailing to be heard on earth. See my father, what a tragedy hath his life been, yet none ever heard him complain; nay, even my poor self, because I spoke not, you thought me heartless; now, God knoweth, I suffered much. Be not vexed dear," says she, with that old motion of putting my hair off my cropped forehead, "be not vexed that I tell you of your faults. I cannot change. I must be your old scolding mistress until the end."

"I knew them, knew them well," says I through my tears; "with you by my side all should have been

amended; my weakness, my dependence, my cowardice before effort, all, all should have been reformed. But now, what shall I become? Whither betake myself? how go on living with the heart torn from my breast?"

"Oh, hush, Diccon, hush!" said she, "it is thee makes it hard for me to die. Can you hear me still?"

I bent my head lower; her voice was growing faint and far off, as of one being borne away as they speak.

"Feel of the breeches," said she "where they are wadded over my hip. Is there something hard? Oh, say not 't is gone!" wildly striving to raise her head.

I told her that I felt it.

"Put my hand," said she, "where I can feel it too."

I laid her hand upon the spot and she plucked at the seam.

"Hearken," said she, broken and gasping, "there is no time now; seek afterwards! You will find a little sack of soft leather, therein are all my jewels, my mother's from Leyden; sew them into your clothes. When you get to Europe sell them there, not all at once lest suspicion be aroused; they are worth much: stand for your price Diccon! husband the money: if ye are tempted to squander it, to gamble, think 't was your poor mistress's dowry to you, you will not then. I see you no more? — is the fire out, where are you gone?"

She groped for me with her hand; a terrible thing — for both my arms were round her.

"I am here, Agnes," I told her, "never to leave you again."

I had forgotten the priests. One of them whispered in my ear.

"The Sacrament?" said he.

"As you will," said I, not looking at him, "I think 't is too late."

He felt her pulse, then walked softly round to her head, took snow in his hands, and breathing upon it let the water drip upon her forehead in the sign of a cross.

"*Baptizo te,*" he mutters, "*in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen.*"

At the icy trickle she roused and stirred a little.

"I hope," said she, "that God will have mercy upon me. I hope my Redeemer will pardon me. I have sinned, but I was not in all ways a wicked woman. I strove to do my duty by my father."

She never spoke again. Her hand relaxed and fell from my neck where I had placed it. I strove to put it back, but 't was limp and nerveless. I remembered how I had done the same on the night we quarrelled. I dared not raise my head and look upon a world without her.

"Now Lord, now for me too!" I prayed, but was not answered. I may have fainted; I felt one of the priests shaking me by the shoulder; I heard the chink of a spade. At that sound I leapt upon my feet; my brain seemed to catch fire like so much tinder. "Dead, dead!" I repeated, pressing in my eyeballs, but the word meant nothing. They had wrapped her father's body, scorched and mangled, in a cloak, and laid it beside her.

"Take it away," cried I in a fury, "she does not know; she must not see that."

The priests gazed upon me sadly and patiently. One of them, with an Indian, began to scrape away the snow with his spade. I snatched it from his hand and flung it aside.

"What!" cried I, "are ye human? would you enlize her? bury her quick? She is not dead. If

't were me—but she, not she—so warm, so strong, so full of life. Feel,” said I tearing away the doublet at her throat, “her heart is beating; look,” says I “her eyes were closed and have opened; do the dead open their eyes? Put more fire to her feet! Heat the spade! she hath been like this before. 'T is an old illness of her youth, I can rouse her.”

“Richard, Richard,” said my old master with infinite distress, “I swear to you she is dead.”

“'T is a lie,” said I, “you grudge her to me, you have ever grudged her me. You would huddle her underground now to be rid of her. You think not how good she was to ye all; how she cooked for you, sewed for you, thought on your comfort for the few days I had her with me in this damned, damned wilderness. Go on your way if ye will, I will not leave her side.”

“Richard!” said the priest, “your words are those of a madman. I will not rebuke them. Time presses; you realise not what danger all are in. If you will, take up the corpse and bear it along until you are convinced; I will myself help carry it, but we cannot linger here.”

“Why did God kill her?” I cried to him, “why has He punished her? Mine was the sin; I sinned against light, against knowledge, all the penalty should have been paid by me. What we did was no sin to this woman; I swear it to you. Come! you are a man of God; shew me the justice in this!”

“Even though I could, Richard,” says he, “you are in no mood now to have God’s ways justified to you. There may be punishment at hand enough for us all; meantime I can but pray for you; bid you be patient, and await His comfort.”

"Comfort," said I, "I have had too much of such fiery comfort all my life. I scorn it, I reject it. I will go down to hell cursing it. All my days I have writhed beneath His calamitous hand. I confessed, I sought pardon, why did not that disarm it? Why did ye absolve me at all? What a mockery were your absolutions with this to come. Oh! my love, my love!" and with this I fling myself down upon the body.

All this time the Indians, working with the spade and with their hands, had dug a trench in the ground, still soft from autumn's rains, and laid the old man's body therein. They made a motion as though to take up my wife's, but Père Jogues forbade it.

"Not that one," said he sternly, "we are to take that one with us!"

I thought his companions murmured, but he silenced them with a gesture.

"Not so," said I, fiercely, "you shall bury her with him. She loved him, they shall not be parted in death. She did her duty by him, another promise foresworn. 'Honour father and mother,' did she not honour him? did she not obey him? See her now, slain in her prime. Will your sophistries expound this?"

The sad faces of my companions in the fitful fire-light; their silence before my reproaches, of a sudden melted my anger. I went to Père Jogues and laid my head upon his shoulder.

"Oh! have patience! have patience, *mon père*," said I, "I am mad, I am wicked, but this goeth nigh past bearing. Give me a few moments, I do but ask a few. I promise I will come with you then."

"Dear pupil," said he returning my caress, "my

'heart doth indeed bleed for you; but you must be a man, Richard, not a child. The dead are in God's hands; but for these poor living creatures, I am to answer. I am their shepherd. I led them here, and must lead them back if I can. How long do you ask?"

"Time to clothe her aright," said I, "she must not be buried thus. Oh! you know not how beautiful she was, *mon père*; you saw her but in these unfit, unseemly rags and her head shorn. Her neck was like a marble tower in a forest, her hair would have strung the bows of an army."

"Do not think of these things now, Richard," pleaded the priest, "offer them to God. Say once and for all, 'the Lord gave and hath taken away,' then play a man's part. These things brooded upon will drive you mad."

"She came with me," I go on, "with me, a poor beaten drudge. She put her hand in mine; when I would have stayed her, she said only, Hasten! hasten! She left her warm fire, her soft bed for me. She came out into the snow, into the naked forest for me. She was no changeful, inconstant woman to adventure such things with a light heart. She loved her home; such order, such propriety as reigned therein never have I seen. She left it all; I gave her a score of minutes to decide; she did not waver for one. She was sitting at the door, lest I should go without her; go to death, to ruin, to destruction without her."

"Richard! Richard! your promise," says the Jesuit with a profound sigh.

"What woman will ever love like this again?" I ask drearily, as I unfasten the bundle: "she was so modest, so shamefaced, my dove! That time I bared

her bosom to kill her, she covered it with her arms rather than strive with me. She scarce would suffer me to see her foot bared for the slipper; she would blush now in death were any other hand to touch her. But I am her own true husband, am I not? flesh of her flesh you made me, did ye not? her body is my body?"

I stooped down once more and felt her heart, her forehead, her hands. All were cold with that chillness of death that is like no other. As I felt her, the life warmth was ebbing under my very hand.

"Once before," says I, turning round to them, "her father came and found her gone. She was but a girl, and her husband beat her; they found her lying among flowers. I think that would have been a kinder death; do ye not? Think you, *mon père*, that God ever laughs, when we thank him for our dear ones' lives, who knoweth what He hath saved them for. Did the old man remember it, I wonder, when he came back sick and fevered, and found her gone, and watched the snow falling?"

All at once my grief and indignation ended, like a vessel voided.

"Leave us!" said I. "I will call ye when she is clothed. Have the grave dug deeper."

When I unbuttoned her doublet, I saw a little soiled ribbon that I had not noted before, around her neck. There was the medal I had so lately given her fastened upon it, and something else beside, that puzzled me awhile, until, by holding it near my face, I saw 't was the leather collar and tag of brass I had worn upon me at my first coming to Summerfield.

"How came it," I said unto Père Jogues, when we were once again upon our awful journey, and the

mould and the clay and two days' snow lay over her face, "how was it," I asked him, "that although I loved this woman dearly and have now such proof that she loved me, there should have been at all times such a strife and attrition of our two spirits, that we were cheated out of all the joy we promised ourselves, and now I am left little save tears and sighs as mementoes of her. Was this the fruit of our sin? Are all who transgress punished thus? Surely not. Surely 't is the property of sin to harden hearts, not to rend and pierce them. Yet I swear to you, in this sinful intimacy itself I approved more of sorrow and discipline than the harshest of penitentiaries shall ever prescribe me for its satisfaction. Yes, even at its extremest hours, when my arms were round the woman, her lips to mine, and all our kisses ran into one as the rain drops from a roof run into a stream, what was it, but as though I embraced a cage, wherein, untamed and untouched, her spirit fluttered and kept aloof from the violence of my desire? Why was it, oh tell me why, that I was never happy? Was it a lack of my nature to enjoy or of the thing itself to satisfy?"

To whom the priest:

"Marriage, Richard," replies he, "for I will call that marriage although therein ye sought not God's blessing until so late—marriage may be either of two things, themselves diverse and contrary. To a carnal heart, the ultimate of this world's delusions; to a spiritual, the poignantest realisation of eternity. The attraction of woman for man goeth far beyond the senses, even for the most brutal, though he know it not and would scoff at it if 't were told him. Consciously or no, believe me, there is none but feebleth

the transitoriness, the unsubstantiality of the world a burden upon his spirit, since, turn he where he will, all things remind him of his pilgrimage; that which he would possess for ever is but leased to him for a season; that which he would stay to serve his pleasure and ends, passeth on to serve and seek its own. This is the famous melancholia of love, Richard; this the unappeasable desire of possession. That one living creature encountered by chance, first wistfully regarded, then loved, then coveted, standeth unto mankind a symbol for all the world. Can they but have it and hold it, then the world escapes them no longer; lo! the intangible hath been touched, the incorporeal become flesh, the unattainable been attained. You have confest to me yourself that when you saw this poor woman, you said to your heart, 'Here is peace for me at last within her arms; here is an end of all my toils and journeys.' But the end, Richard, is not here; the end is in heaven. The most blessed, the most favoured, the most congenial of wedded lives are naught but a sore and toilsome pilgrimage toward it, hand in hand. As for those others upon whom God's blessing rests not — what shall be said of them? They are swimmers from a wreck, that cling in one another's arms, and drown together, two by two."

THE END

NOTE BY EDITOR

THE cipher from which this Memoir has been compiled ends here, and the exact nature of the events that supervened before its author's arrival in Europe in the autumn of the following year remains to a large extent conjectural and involved in an obscurity which he never was at pains to disperse. Concerning the fate of his companions there is unhappily no room for doubt. The little band of priests and Indians fell into an ambush of the Mohawks immediately after crossing the Connecticut River, and were put to death with all the shocking circumstances of torture and mutilation which rendered the name of this tribe two hundred years ago a synonym for cruelty and ferocity. Fitzsimon may possibly have been captured at the same time and escaped from their hands; if so it is inexplicable that no mention whatsoever should be made of him in the Martyrologies of Père Jogues and his companions, which were compiled at a later date from material furnished by Iroquois converts who had been witnesses of the dreadful event. We are inclined to think that he must previously have wandered away from his companions, perhaps in one of those accessions of despair of which the close of his narrative gives a hint, and losing his bearings, been unable to rejoin them. He was picked up some ten days after the massacre by a hunting party of the same tribe, starving, half naked — singing, the tradition says, and no doubt demented. The savages appear to have treated him with a consideration often shown by primitive peoples to the distraught in mind, and to have taken him to the Dutch trading post of Rensselaerwyck and afterward to Fort Orange, the commandant of which place, a French Protestant gentleman, befriended him, and sent him home to Europe by way of New Amsterdam in a States vessel of war. It should perhaps be mentioned that rumour says the unhappy man had contrived to secrete upon his person sundry jewels of great value before leaving the plundered

town, a circumstance that may not be without its bearing upon the humanity shown him by the Dutch.

The judgments which men pass upon their conduct in times of storm and stress err, as often as not, upon the side of severity, and, at the close of what has not been altogether an easy nor a grateful task, the translator of this sad story is pleased to be able to subjoin another estimate of this man's character from a dispassionate hand. The passage quoted below occurs in a letter written shortly after the author's death by an English Catholic nobleman, a companion in arms of his youth, to Abbé Southcote, the friend and preceptor of Pope.

"He was at the time of our lying together in the Island" (of Man) "some twenty-five years old, yet looked younger, well above middle height, of a slender figure, yet nimble and out-chested. His skin was fair and a little freckled, the mouth full and well shaped with a little light hair on his lips; his teeth small, white, and even; his eyes were grey, the brows and lashes black and the first arched very prettily. He was, in action, of an obstinate and bloody courage, as ready to go at his enemy and as loath to come off him as any man I ever knew. In battle, indeed, or upon the near prospect of it, there was a change wrought in him; from being silent and melancholy he became gay and talkative and his cheeks, which were ordinarily pale, would turn red. He was a good horseman and an accomplished swordsman, having learned the use of his sword abroad in Europe. . . . He was a man of so profuse a disposition, he would pull the rings off his fingers or the earrings from his ears to relieve a comrade's necessities; nay, upon an adequate petition, call double to St. Martin and give him his whole cloak. He was perhaps overfond of dress, which was made a reproof to him latterly among our shabby garrisons, yet, as he never drew pay but served a volunteer all his life I see not how that could justly be laid against him. There was an officer of the Parliament he took prisoner in Oxfordshire and presently let go upon the present of a very valuable ring; the King was mighty angry at this, saying he should have kept him to exchange with an officer of even rank to which he answered: that as he served the King's Majesty without pay 't was hard he might not have the

benefit of his prisoners; but 't was a black mark for him then and afterwards.

"There were two things I observed in him, true marks of predestination, though at the time I recognised them not for such.

"First, his love of children and of God's poor. During that terrible storm at Peel, when most of the fishing fleet was lost, he made himself God's advocate on the widows' behalf, and rested not until he had got a day's pay from all the soldiers and a week's pay from the officers of the garrison. Then he would be down at their poor cottages in his time of leisure, comforting the women with pious texts, of which he had as good a store as any Puritan; indeed there was a name for him in Oxford on this account too blasphemous for me to set down; and some have seen him tending little children in a house wherein the mother was ailing.

"Secondly, his devotion to the Blessed Mother of God. This is illustrated by so pretty an anecdote I cannot forbear to tell it. There was a poor needlewoman worked for him in Oxford to whom he did some service, and she, wishing to repay him, asked if she might not embroider for him an headband for his horse with his sweetheart's name, as was the custom among our young gentlemen. I had the curiosity to examine it afterwards where it hung with the rest of his harness and found he had had wrought in blue: *Maria, non mi Scordate!*"

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